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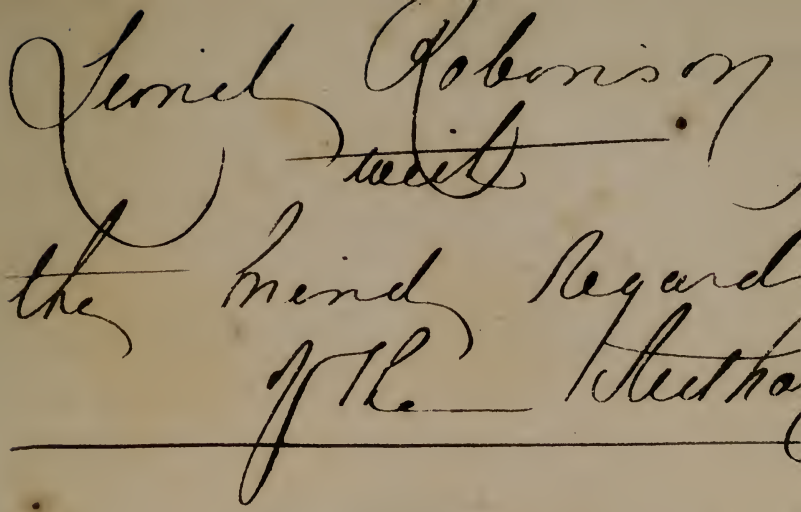
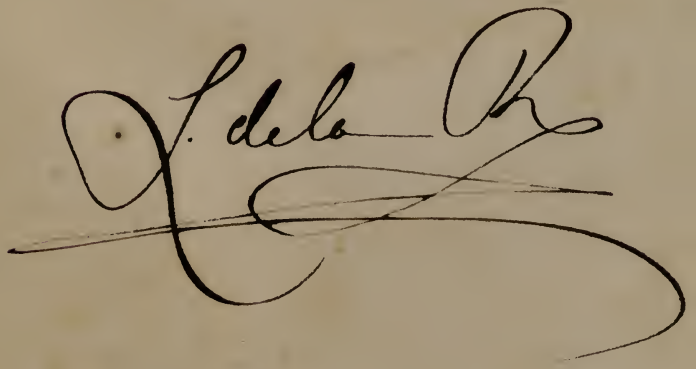


TRICOTRIN

THE STORY OF A WAIF AND STRAY.

VOL. I.



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TRICOTRIN

THE STORY OF A WAIF AND STRAY.

BY OUIDA,

AUTHOR OF 'STRATHMORE,' 'CHANDOS,' 'IDALIA,'
'UNDER TWO FLAGS,' &c.

'Better an outlaw than not free.'—*Jean Paul.*

'Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed,
. . . . unclassed, tribeless, nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself.'—*Shelley.*

'Love, and do what you will.'—*St Augustine.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.
1869.

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JOHN CHILDS AND SON, PRINTERS.

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DEDICATED

TO

The American People,

IN

CORDIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THEIR RECEPTION OF MY WORKS:

AND TO

THOSE MEN AMONGST THEM, BOTH OF NORTH AND SOUTH,

WHOSE CHARACTERS I HONOUR,

AND WHOSE

FRIENDSHIP HONOURS ME.

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TRICOTRIN,

THE STORY OF A WAIF AND STRAY.

CHAPTER I.

IT was autumn; a rich golden autumn of France, with the glow of burning sunsets, and the scarlet pomp of reddened woods, and the purple and the yellow of grapes gathered for the wine-press, and the luscious dreamy odour of over-ripened fruits crushed, by careless passing feet, upon the orchard-mosses. Afar off, in the full noonday, the winding road was white and hot with dust; but here in a nook of forest land, in a dell of leafy growth between the vineyards which encompassed it, the air was cool and the sunlight broken with shade, whilst, through its stillness where the boughs threw the shadow darkest, a little torrent

leapt and splashed, making music as it went, and washing round the base of an old ivy-grown stone tower that had fallen to ruin in the midst of its green nest.

There was no sound except one, beside that of the bright tumbling stream, though now and then there came in from the distance the ring of a convent-clock's bells, or the laugh of a young girl at work amongst the vines;—no sound except one, and that was the quick, sharp, gleeful crack of nuts in a monkey's teeth. There were squirrels by the score there in that solitary place, who had right, hereditary and indisputable they would have said, to all the nuts that the boughs bore and the grasses hid; but Mistigri was no recognizer of rights divine; she loved nuts and cared little how she got them, and she sat aloft in her glory, or swung herself from twig to twig, crushing, and eating, and flinging the shells away, with all that gleeful self-satisfaction of which a little black monkey is to the full as capable, after successful piracy, as any conquering sovereign.

'Mistigri, Mistigri!' said her companion, surveying her, 'who could doubt your human-affinity who once had seen you pilfer? Monkey stows away her stolen goods in a visible pouch unblushingly; man smuggles his away unknown in the guise of "profit" or "percentage," "commerce" or "annexation"—the natural advancement of civilization

on the simple and normal thieving. Increased cranium, increased caution; that's all the difference, eh, Mistigri?'

Mistigri cocked her head on one side, but would not waste time in replying: her little shiny black mouth was full of good kernels.

'Why talk when you can take?' she would have asked.

Her owner did not press for an answer, but sung, carelessly, snatches of Goethe's *Millsong* and of Müller's *Whisper*, his voice chiming in with the bubble of the stream while he took at intervals his noontide meal, classic and uncostly, of Chasselas grapes and a big brown roll.

He was a man of some forty years, dressed in a linen blouse, with a knapsack as worn as an African soldier's lying at his feet, unstrapped, in company with a flask of good wine and a Straduarius fiddle. He himself was seated on a fallen tree, with the sun breaking through the foliage above in manifold gleams and glories that touched the turning leaves bright red as fire, and fell on his own head when he tossed it up to fling a word to Mistigri or to catch the last summer-song of a blackbird. It was a beautiful Homeric head; bold, kingly, careless, noble, with the royalty of the lion in its gallant poise, and the challenge of the eagle in its upward gesture;—the head which an artist would have given to his Hector, or his Phœbus, or his Dionysus. The features were

beautiful too, in their varied mobile eloquent meanings; with their poet's brows, their reveller's laugh, their soldier's daring, their student's thought, their many and conflicting utterances, whose contradictions made one unity—the unity of genius.

At this moment there was only the enjoyment of a rich and sunny nature, in an idle moment, written on them as he ate his grapes and threw fragments of wit up at Mistigri where she was perched amongst the nut-boughs. But the brilliant eyes, so blue in some lights, so black in others, had the lustre and the depths of infinite meditation in them; and the curling lips that were hidden under the fulness of their beard, had the delicate fine mockery of the satirist blent with the brighter, franker mirth of genial sympathies. And his face changed as he cast the crumbs of his finished meal to some ducks that paddled lower down in the stream where it grew stiller around the old tower, and took up his Stradnarius from the ground with the touch of a man who loves the thing that he touches.

The song of the water that had made the melody to his banquet was in his brain;—sweet, wild, entangled sounds, which he felt a need to reproduce, with the self-same fancy which a painter feels to catch the fleeting hues of fair scenes that would haunt him for ever unless exorcised thus.

'Quiet, Mistigri!' he said softly, and the monkey sat still on her hazel bough, eating indeed, but

noiselessly. He listened one moment more to the stream, then drew the bow across the strings.

The music thrilled out upon the silence, catching the song of the brook in harmony as Goethe caught it in verse,—all its fresh delicious babble, all its rush of silvery sound, all its cool and soothing murmur, all its pauses of deep rest. All of which the woodland torrent told—of the winds that had tossed the boughs into its foam; of the women-faces its tranquil pools had mirrored; of the blue burden of forget-me-nots and the snowy weight of lilies it had borne so lovingly; of the sweet familiar idyls it had seen where it had wound its way below quaint mill-house walls choked up with ivy-growth where the children and the pigeons paddled with rosy feet upon the resting wheel; of the weary sighs that had been breathed over it beneath the grey old convents where it heard the miserere steal in with its own ripple, and looked itself a thing so full of leaping joy and dancing life to the sad eyes of girl-recluses, —all these of which it told the music told again.

The strings were touched by an artist's hand, and all that duller ears heard, but dimly, in the splash and surge of the brown fern-covered stream, he heard in marvellous poems and translated into clearer tongue—the universal tongue which has no country and no limit, and in which the musician speaks alike to sovereign and to savage.

There was not a creature there to hear, save the

yellow-winged lorioles and Mistigri who was absorbed in nuts; but he played on to himself an hour or more for love of the theme and the art. And an old peasant woman, going through the trees at some yards distance, and seeing nothing of the player for the screen of leaves, laughed and stroked the hair of a grandchild who clung to her afraid of the magical woodland-melodies : ' The wood-elves, little one ? Bah ! that is only Tricotrin !'

Her feet, brushing the fallen leaves with pleasant sound, soon passed away; he played on and on, such poetry as Bamboche drew from his violin, whereat Poussin bowed his head, weeping with the passion of women, as through his tears he beheld, as in a vision, the ' Et in Arcadia Ego.'

Then, as suddenly as he had begun, Tricotrin dropped the bow and ceased; and struck a light and smoked,—a great Arab pipe of some carved wood, black and polished by long use.

On the silence that succeeded there came a low laugh of delight—the laugh of a very young child. He looked up and down and amongst the ferns at his feet; the laughter was close beside him, yet he could see nothing. He smoked on indifferently, watching the bright eyes of the birds glancing out from the shadow; then the laugh came again; at his side, as it sounded; he rose and pushed aside some branches and looked over a broken rail behind him, beyond a tangled growth of reeds and rushes.

There he saw what had aroused him from his smoke-silence: more than half hidden under the moss and the broad tufted grasses, stretching her hands out at the gorgeous butterflies that fluttered above her head, and covered with the wide yellow leaves of gourds and the white fragrant abundance of traveller's-joy, was the child whose laughter he had heard. A child between two and three years old, her face warm with the flush of past sleep, her eyes smiling against the light, her hair lying like gold-dust on the moss, her small fair limbs struggling uncovered out of a rough red cloak that alone was folded about her. The scarlet of the mantle, the whiteness of the clematis, the yellow hues of the wild gourds, the colour of the winged insects, the head of the child rising out of the mosses, and the young face that looked like a moss-rosebud just unclosing, made a picture in their own way; and he who passed no picture by, but had pictures in his memory surpassing all the collected art of galleries, paused to survey it with his arms folded on the rail.

Its solitude, its strangeness, did not occur to him; he looked at it as at some painting of his French brethren's easels, that was all. But the child, seeing a human eye regard her, forgot her butterflies, and remembered human wants; she stretched her hands to him instead of to her playmates of the air. '*J'ai faim!*' she cried, with a

plaintive self-pity; bread, she thought, would be better than the butterflies.

'Hungry?' he answered, addressing her as he was wont to do Mistigri. 'I have nothing for you. Who brought you there, you Waif and Stray? Put down there and left, to get rid of the trouble of you, apparently? Well,—D'Alembert was dropped down in the streets, and found a foster-mother in a milk-woman, and *he* did pretty well afterwards. Perhaps some dainty De Tencin brought you likewise into the world, and has hidden you like a bit of smuggled lace, only thinking you nothing so valuable. Is it so, eh?'

'*J'ai faim!*' cried the child afresh; all her history was comprised to her in the one fact that she wanted bread,—as it is comprised to a mob.

'Catch, then!' he replied to the cry, dropping into her hands from where he leant a bunch of the Chasselas grapes that still remained in his pocket. It sufficed; the child was not so much pained by hunger as by thirst, though she scarcely knew the difference between her own sensations; her throat was dry, and the grapes were all she wanted. He, leaning over the lichen-covered rail, watched her while she enjoyed them one by one. She was a very pretty child, the prettier for that rough moss covering, out of which her delicate fair shoulders and chest rose uncovered, while the breeze blew about her yellow glossy curls.

'Left there to be got rid of,—clearly,' he murmured to her. 'Any one who picks you up will do you the greatest injury possible. Die now in the sunshine among the flowers; you will never have such another chance of a poetical and picturesque exit. Who was ingenious enough to hide you there? The poor shirt-stitcher, who was at her last sou?—or Madame la Marquise who was at her last scandal? Was it Magdalene who has to wear sack-cloth for having dared to sin without money to buy absolution? —or Messalina who covers ten thousand poisonous passions with a silver embroidered robe, and is only discreetly careful of "consequences?" Which was your progenitrix, little one, eh?'

To this question so closely concerning her, the Waif could give no answer, being gifted with only imperfect speech; but, happy in the grapes, she laughed up in his eyes her unspoken thanks, shaking a cluster of clematis above her head, as happy in her couch of flowers and moss as she could have been in any silver cradle. The question concerned her in nothing yet: the bar sinister could not stretch across the sunny blue skies, the butterflies flew above her as familiarly as above the brow of a child-queen, and the white flowers did not wither sooner in bastard than in legitimate hands.

'How the sun shines on you, as if you were a princess!' he soliloquized to her. 'Ah! Nature is a terrible socialist; what republicans she would make

of men if they listened to her. But there is no fear for them,—they are not fond enough of her school! You look very comfortably settled here, and how soon you will get life over. You are very fortunate. You will suffer a little bit,—paf! what of that? Everybody suffers that little bit sooner or later, and it grows sharper the longer it is put off. Suppose you were picked up by somebody and lived, it would be very bad for you. You would be a lovely woman, and lovely women are the devil's aides-de-camps. You would snare men in your yellow hair, and steal their substance with the breath of your lips, and dress up lying avarice as love, and make a miser's greed wear the smile of a cherub. Ah! that you would. And then would come age, a worse thing for women like you than crime or death; and you would suffer an agony with every wrinkle and a martyrdom in every whitening lock, and you would grow hard, and haggard, and painted, and hideous even to the vilest among men; and you would be hissed off the stage in hatred by the mouths that once shouted your triumphs, while you would hear the fresh comers laugh as they rushed on to be crowned with the roses that once wreathed your own forehead. And then would come the end,—the hospital and the wooden shell, and the grave trampled flat to the dust as soon almost as made, while the world danced on in the sunlight unheeding. Ah! be wise. Die while you can, among your butterflies and flowers!'

The child, lying below there in her nest, looked up in his eyes again and laughed: 'Viva!' she cried, while she clasped her grapes in her two small hands.

'Viva? What do you mean by that? Do you mean, imperfectly, to ask to live in Italian? Fie then! That is unphilosophic. Take the advice of two philosophers. Bolingbroke says, there is so much trouble in coming into the world and in going out of it, that it is barely worth while to be here at all, and I tell you the same. He had the cakes and ale too, but the one got stale and the other bitter. What will it be for you who start with neither cakes nor ale? Life is not worth much to a man. It is worth just nothing at all to a woman. It is a mistake altogether, and lasts just long enough for all to find that out, but not long enough for any to remedy it. We always live the time required to get thoroughly uncomfortable, and as soon as we are in the track to sift the problem—paf!—out we go like a rushlight, the very moment we begin to burn brightly. Be persuaded by me, and don't think of living; you have a golden opportunity of getting quittance of the whole affair. Don't throw it away!'

The good advice of Experience was, as it always is, squandered on the impetuosity of Ignorance. The child laughed still over her Chasselas bunch, murmuring still over and over again the nearest approach she knew to a name:

'Viva—Viva—Viva!'

'The obstinacy of women prematurely developed. Why *will* you not know when you are well off? "Those whom the gods love die young." If you would just now prefer to have your mother's love instead of the gods', you are wrong. What have you before you? You will be marked "outcast." You will have nothing as your career except to get rich by snaring the foolish; or to be virtuous and starve on three-halfpence a day, having a pauper's burial as reward for your chastity. If you live, your hands must be either soiled or empty. I would die among the clematis if I were you.'

But the child, persistently regardless of wise counsel, only laughed still, and strove to struggle from her network of blossom and of moss.

'Your mind is set upon living,—what a pity!' murmured her solitary companion. 'When your hair is white, how you will wish you had died when it was yellow,—everybody does,—but while the yellow lasts nobody believes it! You want to live? So Eve wanted the "fruit of fairest colours." If I were to help you to have your own way now, you would turn on me thirty years hence as your worst enemy. Were you able to understand reason,—but your sex would prevent that, let alone your age. Let us ask Mistigri. Mistigri, is that Waif to live or to die?'

The companion and counsellor, who lived in his

pocket, and was accustomed to be thus appealed to, had swung herself down on to the grass, and was now squatted on the rail beside him. The child catching sight of the monkey, tried to stretch and stroke her, and Mistigri, who was always of an affable and, when she had eaten sufficient herself, of a generous turn of mind, extended her little black paw, and tendered a nut, as an overture to an acquaintance.

'*You* vote for life too?' cried Tricotrin. 'Bah, Mistigri. I thought you so sensible,—for your sex! When a discerning mother, above the weakness of womenkind, has arranged everything so neatly, we should be the most miserable sentimentalists to interfere?—'

As he spoke, the little creature, who had been vainly striving to free herself from her forest-cradle, ceased her efforts and looked up in piteous mute entreaty, her eyes wet and soft with glistening tears, her mouth trembling with an unspoken appeal.

He, who saw a wounded bird only to help it, and met a lame dog only to carry it, was unable to resist that pathetic helplessness. He turned and lifted his voice.

'Grand'mère Virelois, are you there? Here is something in your way, not in mine.'

In answer to the shout there came out from the low broken door of the ruined tower an old peasant-woman, brown and bent and very aged, but blythe as

a bird, and with her black eyes as bright as the eyes of a mouse under the white pent-house of her high, starched cap.

'What is it, good Tricotrin?' she asked, in that sweet, singing voice that makes the accent of many French peasant women so lingering and charming on the ear; the voice that has in it all the contentment of the brave, cheery spirit within.

'A Waif and Stray,' answered Tricotrin. 'Whether from Mary Magdalene or Madame la Marquise is unknown, probably will never be known. Curses go home to roost, but chickens don't. The Waif is irrational, she thinks a mouthful of black bread better than easy extinction amongst the ferns. Claudine de Tencin has left a feminine d'Alembert in a moss-cradle; are you inclined to play the part of the foster-mother?'

Grand'mère Virelois listened to the harangue, comprehending it no more than if he had spoken in Hebrew, but she was used to him, and thought nothing of that.

'What is it I am to see?' she asked again, peering curiously with lively interest amongst the leaves. Before he could answer she had caught sight of the child, with vehement amaze and ecstatic wonder; the speech had been as Hebrew to her, but the fact was substantial and indisputable. Crossing herself in her surprise, with a thousand expletives of pity and admiration, she bent her little

withered but still active form beneath the rail, and stooped and raised the foundling—raised her, but only a little from the ground.

'Holy Virgin! Tricotrin!' she cried, 'look here! the child is fastened. Help me!'

He looked quickly as she called him, and saw that the withes of osiers and the tendrils of wild vine had been netted so tightly around the limbs, tied here and there with strong twine, that the infant could never have escaped from its resting-place; it had evidently been so fastened that the child might perish there unseen. His face darkened as he looked.

'Murder! not mere neglect. Ah! this is Madame la Marquise at work, not Magdalene!' he murmured, as he slashed the network right and left with his knife, and set the Waif at liberty, while Grand'mère Virelois went into a woman's raptures on the young beauty of the 'petit Gésu,' and a woman's vehement censures of a sister's sin.

Tricotrin smoked resignedly, whilst her raptures and her diatribes expended themselves; it was long before either were exhausted.

'Don't abuse the mother,' he interposed at last. 'Everybody gets rid of troublesome consequences when they can. We've done no good in disturbing her arrangements. We have only disinterred a living blunder that she wished to bury.'

'For shame, Tricotrin!' cried Grand'mère, quivering with horror, whilst she folded the child

in her withered arms. 'You can jest on such wickedness! You can excuse such a murderess!'

'Paf!' said Tricotrin, lightly blowing away a smoke ring. 'The whole system of creation is a sliding scale of murders. All the world over life is only sustained by life being extinguished.'

Grand'mère Virelois, who was a pious little woman, shuddered and clasped the child nearer.

'Ah—h—h! the vile woman! How will she see our Lady's face on the last day?—'

'How she will meet the world she lives in is more the question with her now, I imagine. An eminently sagacious woman! and you and I are two sentimentalists to interfere with her admirably artistic play. So you *would* live, little one? I wonder what you will make of what you have got? A Jeremiad if you are a good silly woman; a Can-can-measure if you are a bad clever one. Which will it be, I wonder?'

'Mon Dieu, it is an angel!' murmured Grand'-mère, 'such hair, like silk,—such eyes,—such a rose for a mouth! And left to die of hunger and cold! Ah, may the Holy Mary find her out and avenge her crime, the wicked one!'

'The vengeance will come quickly if the sinner live in a garret; it will limp very slowly if she shelter in a palace. Well, since you take that child in your arms do you mean to find her the piece of bread the unphilosophic cast-away will want?'

'Will I not! if I go without myself. Oh the pretty little child! who could have left you? Wherever the mother dwells may the good God hunt her down!'

'Deity as a detective? Not a grand idea that. Yet it is the heavenly office that looks dearest to man when it is exercised upon others! Grand'mère, answer me. Are you going to keep that Waif?'

The bright brown wrinkled homely face of the good old woman grew perplexed.

'Ah, my friend,—times are so bad,—it is hard work to get a bit in the pot for oneself, and I stitch, stitch, stitch, and spin, spin, spin, till I am blind many a time. And yet the pretty child,—with no one to care for it! I do not know?—she must be brought up hard if she come to me. Not a lentil even to put in the water and make one fancy it is soup, for days and days in these bitter times! But do you know nothing more of her than this, Tricotrin?'

'Nothing.'

His luminous eyes met hers fully, and frankly; she knew—all the nations where he wandered knew—that the affirmative of Tricotrin was more sure than the truth of most men's oaths.

'Then she must be abandoned here by some wretch to starve unseen?'

'It looks like it.'

'Ah! the little angel! What does the barbarous brutal heart of stone deserve?'

'What it will get if it lodge in the breast that rags and tatters cover,—what it will not get if it lodge in the breast that heaves under silks and laces.'

'True enough! But the good God will smite in his own time. Oh, little one, how could they ever forsake thee?' cried Grand'mère, caressing afresh the child, who was laughing and well contented in her friendly and tender hold.

'Then you are going to adopt her?'

'Adopt her? Mother of Jesus! I dare not say that. You know how I live, Tricotrin,—how hardly, though I try to let it be cheerfully. If I had a little more she should share it, and welcome; but as it is, —not a mouthful of chesnuts, even, so often; not a drop of oil or a bit of garlic sometimes weeks together! She would be better off at the Foundling Hospital than with me. Besides, it is an affair for the Mayor of the Commune.'

'Certainly it is. But if the most notable Mayor can do nothing except send this foundling amongst the others, would you like better to keep her?'

Grand'mère Virelois was silent and thoughtful a minute; then her little bright eyes glanced up at him from under their white linen roofing, with a gleam in them that was between a smile and a tear.

'You know how I lost *them*, Tricotrin. One in Africa,—one at the Barricades,—one crushed under a great marble block, building the Préfet's palace.

And then the grandchild too,—the only little one,—so pretty, so frail, so tender, killed that long bitter winter, because the food was so scarce, like the young birds dead on the snow! You know, Tricotrin?—and what use is it to take her to perish like him, though in her laughter and her caresses I might think that he lived again?'

'I know!' said Tricotrin, softly, with an infinite balm of pity, and of the remembrance that was the sweetest sympathy, in his voice. 'Well—if M. le Maire can find none to claim her, she shall stay with you, Grand'mère, and, as for the food, that shall not trouble you; I will have a care of that.'

'*You?* Holy Jesus! how good!'——

'Not in the least. I abetted her in her ignorant and ridiculous desire to exchange a pleasant death amongst the clematis for all the toil and turmoil of prolonged existences; I am clearly responsible for my share in the folly. I cut the meshes that her sagacious mother had knotted so hardily; I must accept my part in the onus of such unwarrantable interference. You keep the Waif; and I will be at the cost of her.'

'But then, Tricotrin, you call yourself poor?'

'So I am. But one need not be a millionnaire to be able to get a few crumbs for that robin. The creature persisted in living, and I humoured her caprice. It was mock humanity, paltry sentiment; Mistigri was partly at fault, but I mostly. We

must accept the results. They will be disastrous probably—the creature is feminine—but such as they are we must make the best of them.'

'Then *you* will adopt her?'

'Not in the least. But I will see she has something to eat; and that you are able to give it her if her parents cannot be found. Here is a gold bit for the present minute, and when we know whether she is really and truly a Waif, you shall have more to keep the pot over your fire full and boiling. Adieu, Grand'mère.'

With that farewell, he, heedless of the voluble thanks and praises that the old woman showered after him, and of the outcries of the child who called to Mistigri, put his pipe in his mouth, his violin in his pocket, and throwing his knapsack over his shoulder brushed his way through the forest growth.

'Mock-sentiment!' he said to himself. 'You and I have done a silly thing, Mistigri. What will come of it?'

The monkey cracked a fair-looking fat nut which she carried, with glee; and cast it forth in disgust; the handsome shell had dust, and a maggot, within it.

'Ah!' thought Tricotrin, taking the nut as a parable, 'will that young innocent-looking life yonder ever reward us by corruption at its core?

CHAPTER II.

THERE were two leagues between him and the nearest town, and this wanderer little loved any contact with the law or its officers, with the routine and details of citizenship and communities. But chance had brought him, and him alone, upon his little cast-away. Bohemian though he was, he would not neglect the duty that the trouvaille, accidental and little welcome as it might be, brought with it. An evil thing had been clearly done; the search for it lay with the administrators of civil laws. He had no liking for them, and no faith in their sincerity or their efficiency, but at the same time the foundling's safety needed their interference. So he betook himself straight through the vineyards across into the white long road, poplar-fringed and without shadow, which led to the small still, grey town, whose peaked

roofs and pointed towers were rising far away out from a mass of autumn-tinted orchards.

It was a rapid progress with his light swift tread, yet creature after creature stopped him, either of his own will or at their entreaty.

The women working in the fields; the vintagers at labour amongst the grapes; the meek-eyed cows looking over the stone fences; the team of bullocks drawing a timber waggon wearily along; the children filling a pitcher at the roadside waterspout; the old women resting under the wayside crosses;—all had words from him, words which left them brighter, braver, happier, than they had been before those kindly eyes, shining so lustrous in the sun, had fallen on them. Man and child, woman and animal, felt the influence of glance and word, as the languid flowers feel the dew, as the shaded fruit feels the summer warmth.

'What makes thee so merry, child? Has any one given thee money?' asked an old woman—deaf and blind, sitting knitting in the front of her vine-hung, rock-built cottage—of the grandson, who came bounding to her side.

The boy laughed gaily.

'No, Grand'mère. Better still. Tricotrin spoke to me as he passed!'

'Ah, ah! Tricotrin? I wish thou hadst brought him hither. He would have mended thy mother's

spinning wheel—and there are none like him for making dark things look bright.'

'He was in haste, Grand'mère. And he had loitered already, to look at Blase Turgot's sick mare.'

'And cured her at a touch,—is it not?'

'Not quite that. He says he cannot work miracles, though we think he can. But it is certain the beast let him look at her wound as quietly as a lamb,—she who kicks and bites at all who go near! —and he has told Blase Turgot how to get her well in a week.'

The old blind knitter nodded her head several times, with sapient comprehension.

'To be sure, to be sure! He can do what he likes. If he be the Wandering Jew, as they say, it was wise of the good Gésu to bid him stay so long on earth.'

'You think he is that, Grand'mère?' whispered the boy in awe, that subdued his mirth.

The old woman nodded her head again with meaning emphasis.

'It is said,' she answered significantly. 'And I have seen things——'

'But the Jew was wicked, Grand'mère; and he is so good?' objected the boy, who loved little to think that the hand which had just tossed him a great golden-brown pear, was a hand accursed of his Church.

The grandmother laid her knitting down on her lap, looking out at the sunshine as though her blind eyes saw its beauty.

'Pierre,—it may well be that a life led in atonement is the life nearest to God, and most blessed to men. Besides—' and she lowered her voice as one who speaks sacrilege fearingly, 'besides—thou knowest he has no love for the priests, has Tricotrin.'

Pierre nodded, but he remained unconvinced; in his secret soul he had no love for the priests himself, finding infinite weariness in his aves; and, moreover, the true instinct of the child felt, without reasoning on its instinct, that the brightness and the strength, the genius and the sweetness, of the life they spoke of were too unshadowed, and too unsaddened, to be the mournful though hallowed offsprings of remorse.

CHAPTER III.

'YOU get on ill, friend Turgot? Of course you do. You are surprised? I am not. For a sou you give a sou's worth. Ignoramus! how is that compatible with prosperity? You want a receipt for the philosopher's stone? I will give you one. Stint the corn to the peasant's mule, and give over-measure to the rich man's fat stalled beast. Cheat the widow out of an egg every time she sells you poultry, and throw a dainty tit-bit gratis into M. le Curé's dinner. When the woman-tramp sits down famished give her the mouldy bread, and when the Mayor of the Commune calls for wine serve him your best and oiliest. As soon as an inundation or a fire breaks out far away in other provinces let your name loom large in subscription; when the ragged children creep in to pick up the odd barley-corns thrown to your barn-door

fowls drive them away with a crack of the whip. Do this and more likewise, Turgot, and you will find the philosopher's stone turn you gold!'

Tavern-keeper Turgot, thus apostrophized, shook his head pensively in a sorrowful perplexity, standing at the porch of his good inn, the Golden Lion.

'Ah! it is well to talk, Tricotrin, and your lips ever melt into laughter and irony. But you know me,—my receipts are small, my compassion is enormous; the money runs, runs, runs, like a scampering mouse, and never comes back again!—what would you? I have not the talent to cheat.'

'And you became an inn-keeper? Imbecile!'

'An inn-keeper? Eh monsieur! It is not only in an inn one needs that talent to prosper.'

'Oh no; it is wanted in imperial cabinets as much as in wayside ones; and the bills of a country want doctoring as much as the bills of a café! If you cannot cheat, my Turgot——'

'What can I do?'

'Break stones. It is the general finale of honesty!'

The landlord, amused if not solaced, laughed a little despite himself, and went within to attend the wants of one of the few wanderers to the unprofitable though admirable Golden Lion, which stood so charmingly, close under the shadow of a noble old brown church, and fronting the market-place, then all ablaze with rich autumnal colour, where the fruit-

women sat with piles of melons, and gourds, and late peaches, and early grapes, and heaps of damp, sweet-smelling, gathered herbs.

Tricotrin left alone watched the market awhile, taking an artist's pleasure in all that glow and glory of confused hues, and thinking of the words of Antoninus,—'Whatever the seasons bear shall be joyful fruit to me, O Nature; from thee are all things, in thee they subsist, to thee they return.'

For Nature was mother, mistress, daughter, deity, idol, teacher, friend, all in one to Tricotrin; and in all her protean shapes he loved her.

'What is it? All. What has it? Nothing,' was the famous line anent the third estate which once, through Sièyes, convulsed a nation.

Much such a line expressed the social status of Tricotrin, philosopher, poet, cosmopolitan, artist, democrat, and wanderer. 'Many-sided' as ever could be exacted by Greek zeal for mortal perfection, he could be everything by turns; but, for possessions, he had naught save his Straduarius, his Mistigri, and a well-beloved Attavante's Dante. He had the genius of a Mozart,—to make music only to a peasant's festival or his own solitude; the eloquence of a Mirabeau,—to remain a bohemian and be called a scamp; the sagacity of a Talleyrand,—to be worth no more in any pecuniary sense than one of the vintagers at work amongst the grapes; the versatility of a Crichton—to shed his talents' lustre forth on French

hamlets' bridal feasts, Italian olive-growers' frugal suppers, Spanish muleteers' camp-fires, Irish cotters' wakes and revels, Paris labourers' balls and wine-bouts; the wisdom of a Boethius,—to laugh at life with the glorious mirth of Aristophanes, to need as little in his daily wants as Louis Cornaro, to love all pleasure with the Burgundian jest of a Piron. Was this the reckless waste of marvellous gifts thrown away like diamonds cast on a sea? or was it a brave, joyous, wise adoption of a life without care and warmed by the sunlight of nature, careless of the gas glare of fame?

The world thought one way; the bohemian the other. 'Judge no life until its close has been seen,' says the sage; hence it had not yet been proved whether the world or the bohemian was most right.

That he was Tricotrin,—a most markedly distinctive personality moreover,—was all that any one knew of him. It was enough for the people who loved him; and they stretched from Danube to Guadalquiver, from Liffey to Tiber, from Euphrates to Amazon, whilst in France, the land of his adoption if not of his birth, the hand which should have dared to touch him would have been bolder than the boldest of the iron hands which have ever seized and swayed her sceptre.

His life was a poem; often an ironic, often an erotic, often a sublime one; a love-ode one day, a rhymed satire the next, now light as Suckling's

verse, now bitter as Juvenal's, oftenest a Bacchic chant, or a Hudibrastic piece of mockery, but not seldom a noble Homeric epic. Life was a poem with him: he had as little sympathy with those who made it a wailing Miserere of regret, as with those who made it a Monologue of self.

He stood looking out now on the fruit-market, enjoying its profusion of colour as other men enjoy wine; and taking a peach from the basket of one of the girl-sellers, as pretty a little brown creature in the archness of her sixteen years as ever Florian or Greuze caressed ere transferring to eclogue or easel.

'Have you had a good time all this summer, Ninette?' he asked her as they loitered in the deep oak porch of the old Golden Lion.

'Ah yes!' answered Ninette, ever loquacious, thrusting her tanned plump hands deep into the coolness of the vine-leaves as she re-arranged her fruit. 'You know that the château is open—bought by a great foreign lord?'

'Indeed? And you have sold much there?'

'Oh enormously!' cried Ninette. 'The household has taken so much, though the seigneur is only just there. And they have made the place like a fairy palace,—mon Dieu! It is so beautiful, so beautiful; that old ruined desolate Villiers is now like a dream, Tricotrin! Valentin works in the gardens, and I have been over it once, before milord

came;—and once since they let me look through a grating, when he was at his banquet, with a king's state all about him. And he is so handsome—that English noble!——'

And Ninette gave a little quick sigh as she replaced her peaches in their green cradle. Tricotrin smiled, with a slight touch of pity in the amusement of the smile.

'Leave the noble alone, Ninette! His hand would only touch your soft cheek to soil it. The kiss of the eagle's beak kills the wild wood-dove. Do not let a glance of the aristocrat make you cold to poor Valentin.'

Ninette flushed ruddily, like one of her own peaches, but she laughed with a frank, open laugh, that reassured Tricotrin on the fear he had entertained for her peace.

'Oh! there is no thought of that folly! Do you fancy I am such a little fool? Milord Estmere has never looked at me even! and they say he is so proud,—proud as a Bourbon!'

'Estmere!'—he repeated the name rapidly with an eager intonation.

'That is what they call him. He is a great man; he is nothing to me!' said Ninette, pettishly, shouldering her fruit afresh and going off to her stall in as near an approach to bad temper as the bright brunette could know.

Tricotrin's eyes followed her, without seeing her,

to the tawny leathern awning under which her vivacious face gleamed so prettily; the look of interest and of eagerness was still upon his features, and the smile about his mouth had a certain sadness in it foreign to the careless, happy, humorous laughter common there.

'Estmere!' he repeated to himself. The name recalled many memories.

'Estmere at this old château!' he thought as he moved away from the Lion d'Or and through the chequered morning light in which the people of the little town were thronging, some to market, some to matins. 'That is droll. He comes here in the vintage, — as if Beaumanoir, in those old cool green woods, were not enough for one man! Has he aught to do with that little Waif, I wonder? No; not wittingly at least. Earl Eustace has none of these follies, and, if he had, would never drive a woman to desperation; such desperation as must have driven that one, whoever she be, to such a deed. He was betrayed, most foully, but he is no betrayer.'

As the thoughts, disjointed and vague, passed through his mind, he made his way across the market-place, for once too absorbed in reflection and in memory to bid farewell to Ninette, or laugh an adieu with the dark handsome matrons, and the old hardfeatured market-women, who were chaffering and chattering over the price of poultry and the

ripeness of melons, while the angelus rang from the belfry. That heavier and graver fit of musing lasted till he was out of the rampart-walls which still circled the small town, with their relics of feudal fortifications, their ditches full of bulrushes and great campanula-flowers, their stones covered with lichens and with ivy. Then, when he was once more on the highway, with the noble champaign country stretching in vineyards, and rising in hills, around him, Tricotrin shook himself, as a big dog will shake his curls, and shook the alien depression off him; laughed his own mellow laughter at himself; and walked away at a swift, light pace, singing in the richest and most tuneful of tenors Béranger's

'Diogène,
Sous ton manteau
Libre et content je ris et bois sans gêne!'

till the browsing herds lifted their heads at the song, and the vine-labourers in the distance caught the air and hummed it themselves again, saying to each other, 'Tricotrin must be near; you hear his *Diogène?*'

He went back to the place where the day previous he had lighted on the Waif.

The crumbled tower, so old that its history was lost in the days of Philip the Fair, with all the greenery clustering round its masonry, and the

stream splashing under its base, had been abandoned to the bats, the owls, the hares, and to the widowed seventy-year-old Manon Virelois, who lived in its shelter, very hardly, as she had said, maintaining life in her by sheer dint of the courageous, patient, hopeful thrift of her desolate old age.

The tower was approached by a perilous flight of stone steps which led straight into its interior; Tricotrin mounted them quickly, being as lithe and swift as a chamois, and entered the chamber. It was the only one that could be used for human occupance, but clean, and brightened with French skill, and with the radiance of the autumnal creepers that forced themselves through the crevices and grew profusely over the inner walls. In the centre of the grey room, moreover, the old woman herself made a point of picturesque colour, where she sat with an orange kerchief pinned under her chin, and the sun on the dark blue serge of her gown, as she spun on and on at her spinning-wheel, looking up with a cheery smile as he came to her.

'Well, my good friend? what news of the little one?'

'No news,' answered Tricotrin. 'Nobody knows anything about her, and to the best of my belief never will. I have told what we saw to the Mayor—good, stupid soul—and the police are on the look-out about it, but as yet there is no clue to who dropped her there. She must have been put down

very early at sunrise before anybody was stirring.'

'No doubt! Ah! the wicked wretches'—and Grand'mère whirled her wheel with furious mutterings of horror and imprecation upon the unknown heads of the infant's deserters.

Tricotrin, listening amusedly, let her wrath expend itself uninterrupted, whilst at the same moment an inner door that stood a little open was acting as an oaken frame to the subject of their speech, who stood like some old-world painter's cherub, with a large plume of white lilies in one hand, the other pushing back from her brow the clusters of her golden curls.

Tricotrin surveyed her in silence, and she surveyed him,—a singularly lovely child, with great, dark, meditative eyes, and limbs like a sculptured Cupid's scarcely concealed by the little loose linen shirt she wore, dropping off her snowy chest.

'So! there you are, my friend? Are you not ashamed to face me?' said Tricotrin, at length. 'How obstinate is your sex! Now, if you were heiress to an empire, or if the fate of some great race depended on you, the first puff of cold wind would kill you, just out of the contradictory malice of things. A mere unowned bagatelle, a smuggled trifle of straw, a nameless, purposeless, bit of driftwood, without even your origin marked on you, a spurious coin without date or stamp of the mint,

you flourish just because you are wanted no more than a stray mongrel puppy, and are of not so much consequence as a lost bunch of keys. Are you not ashamed of yourself?'

'Tricotrin,' murmured the Grand'mère reproachfully, 'how can you talk so to that little angel, when you know your heart is full of pity for the—'

'Waif,' interrupted Tricotrin. 'Certainly I pity her. I pity every new creature tumbled, nilly-willy, into this ill-managed world. Besides, she must grow up a bad woman. Born under a contraband flag, there will be nothing for her but to join the pirates. She will not be to blame. The minute she was born the law drew a bar between her and the sunlight. She must, of necessity, steal the very few sugar-plums she will ever get, in the darkness of lawlessness. She is branded without deserving it. When she is old enough to see that ugly, unmerited brand, stamped there for no sin of her own, she will be one of a thousand if she do not do something to justify the scorch of the iron.'

The child, who had stood as if listening, gathering confidence, sprang, in a sudden sunny impulse, on to the old woman's lap, and held up her lilies to Tricotrin.

''*Garde! si zoli!*'

Tricotrin nodded assent to the lisped words.

'You would intend to say that though you are born without sugar-plums you contrive to console your-

self with flowers; which is symbolical of the fact that nature is often kind to what society kicks? I concede the proposition. Nature is a shocking Socialist; that is why she is shut out from forum, school, and pulpit. She is a white-robed Hypatia, whom the saints stone, lest her teachings should unseat them,—and there is no venom like the venom of the Cyrils of the Creeds.'

'Mon Dieu! to bewilder the precious infant with all that wisdom!' murmured Grand'mère, concluding that it must be wisdom by a rule that often actuates the world's acceptance of unproved sagacity,—namely, that it was completely unintelligible. 'Is she not lovely, the little darling? What a woman she will make!'

'Humph!' said Tricotrin, musingly; 'she is well enough. Beauty, to a woman who has no name, no father, and no money, is much like the bloom to an unnetted peach—only a signal for the wasps to sting, and the flies to fasten, and the thieves to steal. Had she been ugly it would not have been such a sin against the future to have rescued her. You, and I, and Mistigri did a great wrong. I am afraid we owe her something.'

'And you will help me to keep her, Tricotrin, if nothing is found?' cried the old woman, caressing the child's golden head.

'What does she call herself?' he asked, parrying the question.

'Only that one word, Viva.'

'Viva? Not a bad name for a little pirate, and that is what she will turn, no doubt, out of vengeance for having been smuggled into this rough existence, like a bale of silk smuggled on to a rocky shore.'

Tricotrin smoked in silence some moments, contemplating the Waif, who, leaving her protectress with all the ungrateful vivacious caprice of childhood, had thrown herself down within the doorway, laughing and playing with Mistigri, who had no aversion to a game at any time. She was perfectly happy now, whatever the future held in store. In her young form life was a rosebud just thrust forth into the light of the world; if in the bud a canker festered, it would not be seen until leaf after leaf should have unclosed, and fallen beyond recall.

The old dame glanced first at one, then at the other; and set her spinning-wheel whirling again. She had a certain awe of Tricotrin; holding the credence prevalent in her country that he was the Wandering Jew, could turn dead leaves into gold at pleasure, could heal the sick and smite the healthy, call down storms and call up whirlwinds, become invisible and be always omniscient. Thus she did not dare attempt an interruption to his musing, but left him to his own thoughts,—thoughts ranging over a career filled with the mirth of Piron, the love of colour and of fragrance of Dufresny, the philosophies

of Diderot, the adventurous fortunes of Le Clos.

His erratic, careless, glorious open-air life was mellow as good wine, and radiant as noon; yet he too, like the child, was a Waif and Stray. It moved him with a certain sympathy for her, which tempted him not to cast her forth on chance. For the fragile porcelain of a female child's existence might perish on the rapids of that stream of hazard, where the strong gold-dashed bronze of a bold male life could float and vanquish.

Suddenly, still with his attention on her, he drew out his violin and touched the strings. It had belonged to Blanchini, and had often lulled Pauline Borghese to slumber, while its sounds had floated above the orange grove at Rome. Tricotrin bent his head over it, and played one of those divine melodies of Lulli's, the melodies which used to echo down the alleys of Versailles, and breathe over the voluptuous limbs of Coustou's goddesses.

He was a master of its melody, such as an age sees only once or twice in its generation. Laughing like some troop of revellers, — sobbing like some life worn out by pain,—rich as a carol of choristers' voices,—sad as the moaning of winds through the sea-pines,—the music followed his will as the souls that he moves follow the moods of a great poet, who wakes tears or raillery at his wish, and reaches now to heaven, and penetrates now into the darkness of hell.

As he thus played, the child, lying in a breadth of sunshine, glanced up and listened. Gradually the lilies dropped from her hands, her playmate was neglected, her face flushed with wondering awe, her eyes grew humid, her mouth parted in breathless delight. She never moved or made a sound, but heard, spell-bound to the last.

He laid the instrument aside and looked at her.

'You have a soul—a good deal of it for a female thing; though I am half afraid you have only just sufficient to get you into mischief. You will never be a saint, a martyr, or a heroine, my friend: but I should not be surprised if you develope into a Pompadour or a Cabarrus. Well, that was your lottery. If you had gone on playing I would have had nothing to do with you; as you answer to my music I will have something. I do not want you; you will be a nuisance; but saving your life is almost as bad as giving it you, and, after your unknown parents, I am the most guilty person towards you. I have not much for myself; I shall not have much for you; but, if nothing better come up for you, if nothing be learned of your rights, we will see what we can do to let Grand'mère Virelois keep you, since she has such a taste for the trouble.'

'The Holy Virgin bless you!' cried the old woman. 'You will adopt her?—'

'Far from it. No wise man binds himself. Though I am here to-day, I may be in the moon to-

morrow. Life is a game of chance; so much the better. We should be stifled if chance did not now and then kick a throne into space, and give the accolade to a beggar, to redress the balance and clear the atmosphere. Adopt her? No. But, as I said, I will help you to keep her. She will not cost much yet awhile; and there may be sillier ways of spending coins than in floating a waif,—though I doubt it. And I do not expect much of her future. She has a soul; but female creatures with yellow locks, and mouths like scarlet japonica buds, always kill any soul in them they may have been born with as rapidly as possible when once they are launched on the world—'

'Ah hush, Tricotrin!' murmured Grand'mère, entreatingly. 'All that I can do to teach her aright I will. You know that.'

'Surely I do. But the teachers most likely to get hold of such a woman as the Waif will be, are two devils,—Vanity and the Desire of Riches. If you know how to exorcise them, Amie Virelois, you know what has beaten all the dealers in new creeds since the world began. Mademoiselle Viva!—you will not like Life. "Plus aloës quam mellis habet,' —specially for your sex. All I say is, when you find out how much better it would have been to have embraced a golden opportunity, and died among the clematis, do me the justice to remember that it was

your own obstinacy, and no lack of my good counsel, that made you prolong your existence.'

With which farewell address Tricotrin turned to the old peasant, and in a few serious phrases explained to her the total ignorance prevalent through the district of any clue, or even suspicion, that could lead them to identify the deserters of the child, and settled to provide her with the small sum necessary for the young creature's maintenance, so long as nothing occurred to make it possible to enforce her maintenance from those on whom its duty rested. In the absence of this, the foundling, without him, would have gone to public charity. Partly out of the sympathetic compassion instinctive in him, chiefly out of the knowledge of the poor old woman's poverty and desolation, which his assistance would lighten and the infant's presence enliven, he promised to charge himself with the cost of the child, so long at least as nothing should be discovered of her rightful guardians.

Grand'mère Virelois knew well that the bond would never be broken, and that the money given her would come as surely as the spring or the autumn came; though she knew him also well enough to be aware that it was a thousand chances to one if he ever troubled himself to see again the thing that he protected. She knew his ways, and knew something also of his life, though it was clothed to her

in that garb of fable, with which peasant superstition and exaggeration surrounded it.

The child, whilst her destiny was balanced and decided, played with Mistigri; something stilled by the effect the music had taken on her, but carelessly happy as only childhood can be, catching at the quivering sun-rays on the floor with her hands, and burying her bright head in among her abundance of wood-lilies.

Tricotrin, as he passed away amidst the old woman's thanks and praises, paused a moment beside his Waif, as the monkey leaped up to his shoulder.

'Mademoiselle Viva,—I wonder if you will ever make me repent having taken you out of your clematis coffin?'

Mademoiselle Viva laughed where she lay in the sunshine, pulling the snowy leaves impatiently to pieces of the lilies which she had found so fair, in order that she might reach their golden stamens.

'A bad omen!' said Tricotrin. 'You are changeable and you are ungrateful:—of course you are, though, being feminine; you like that gold glitter, and do not care how the lilies die, so long as you get it. How early your sex shows itself!'

And with that he went out and down the crumbling stairway, singing his *Diogène*.

'What fools we are!' he thought. 'Love free-

dom how we will, we are sure to bind ourselves with some unwelcome tie—a mistress or a spaniel, an Art or a Waif! Idiotcy! The child would have gone amongst the foundlings and grown up into a grisette or a nun; and now—she will look like a princess, and be reared like a peasant, and tease me I daresay all my life long!'

But pity, rather for the lonely tender-souled old woman, than for the stray child, had moved him to make the promise, and he would not draw back from it. Besides, one of the few sorrows of his joyous life had been when a young mother had sunk dead in his arms, with all her rich gitaña's beauty colourless and breathless, like a broken pomegranate flower, and with his son of a day's life dead too in her bosom; for their sakes he had pity on this deserted thing, who also would be called a child of sin, who also might have vainly striven to find warmth at a heart whose pulse was still.

CHAPTER IV.

THE woodland nook in which he had found the Waif, and in which the old tower stood, was a piece of outlying forest-land, between the vineyards of one of the finest champagne districts of central France and the park of the château of Villiers, the chief, indeed for many leagues the only, great demesne in those parts. It was a noble ancient place, that had once belonged to one of the highest races of the country, had passed through many owners' hands since the days of the Eighty-Nine, and had of late been purchased by the object of Ninette's homage, under whose domination it had again arisen to its long-lost grandeur.

The park was like to that of St Cloud; avenue rising above avenue on a steep hill-side, and Tricotrin ascended its broad winding roads beneath their succeeding aisles of trees, the Béranger chant rising

also higher and higher, like the song of a lark, as he mounted the terraced slopes.

These stretched high and far; the forest and park of Villiers were of enormous extent, with the river flashing through them, on which the château itself looked down where it crowned the crest of the hill. Some two hours of swift walking brought him to the summit, and into the private gardens and avenues more immediately close to the house, which was itself a grey picturesque Rénaissance pile, with many towers, many angles, much rich carving, much beautiful alternation of light and shade.

He pushed open a gilded scrolled gate, looking up at the blazonry on the shield of its archway;—it was that of the arms of the foreign house of Estmere. He smiled as he saw them; and went through into the gardens.

A young man was at work amongst their gorgeous autumnal blossoms.

'Good day, Valentin,' said Tricotrin, loitering a moment. 'So you have a new lord?'

'A very good one,' smiled the youth. 'There is no lack of work here now, summer or winter.'

'And you have given up Paris?'

'I have, Monsieur. I cannot be better than well off; and I am well off here.'

'Quite right. It is a mistake, that over-centralization. Every soul rushing to the capital, and

the country left a desert,—it is as if all the blood stayed in the heart: how would the sapless limbs move then? By the way,—why do you not marry Ninette?'

The young man coloured, and destroyed a head of azaleas.

'Ninette is coy, Monsieur,—she has seen these grand people here—'

'Pooh! Because you give the child time to think about them! She loves you, Valentin, but she wants to be more entreated to say so. Women scorn a timid lover; though shyness is the best tribute to their own power, you can never get them to appreciate it.'

The gardener laughed and flushed with pleasure.

'Ah! you know how I adore her,—the little coquette! You know how my one desire is to win her as my wife!'

'Well,—tell her that boldly; you will conquer her. Give her a wedding-ring and a hearth of her own, and she will think no more of the big people up at the château.'

Valentin laughed happily.

'Ah! if I only thought she cared for me—'

'Simpleton! a man is not worth his salt who cannot get the woman he fancies. But if you let little Ninette think you only like her as well as you like Manon, and Rose, and Jacqueline, and Marthe,

and all the girls of the village, why—of course she will begin to ponder on the "*beaux messieurs dorés*" up here.'

Having left that suggestion to bear harvest in the good gardener's simple sincere soul, Tricotrin went onward; it was his way to scatter seeds of peace, and contentment, and reconciliation, and good counsel, in this fashion, without seeming to do more than cast light words most idly.

Valentin was the little peach-seller's first love; her fancy had subsequently been caught by the glitter of a life she could never reach, but Tricotrin knew enough of the village coquette's honest child-nature, through all her vanity, to know that her heart remained true to her early lover, and that she was of the temper, when once under the shade of her own vine, in the house of a husband, never to concern herself but about her fowls, and her flowers, and her Sunday ear-rings, and her spun linen, and the young children, who would play among the scarlet beans and yellow gourds of her garden. So,—a homely, innocent, pleasant life would be led in the fair grape country, instead of another lost one being added to the shoals of painted, drunken, ghastly, greedy lives, in the dens of Paris.

Through the gardens, with their statues gleaming white through groves of yew and cypress, Tricotrin passed on till he came close under the walls of the château, towering high above him, quaint,

majestic, mediæval, while from the peaked roof floated a standard, with the arms and coronet of the Estmeres on it.

He glanced up at the banner, then looked through a veil of flowering creepers that hung over a window near him; — a mullioned window, partially open, so that the chamber within could be seen. It was the old banqueting-room of the building; freshly restored, with rich deep hues of purple, and the soft gleam of dead gold, on panels, and floor, and ceiling; a splendid apartment, with its vast central table furnished forth as meals are set for princes. There were half-a-dozen servants, waiting noiselessly, but there was only one guest for them to serve. And he, as Tricotrin first saw him, made a motion with his hand for his attendants to withdraw, and as he was left alone sank back in his seat with a weary languor, his noon-breakfast scarcely tasted. He was a man some few years younger than the one who watched him, very tall, very fair, of a noble, thoughtful, northern beauty of feature, though his countenance was very grave, and shadowed with a look that had a restless, bitter, infinitely regretful melancholy on it.

He looked like a man on whom some heavy calamity had fallen, and on whom its effect still endured, though striven against with all the strength and pride of a resolute and naturally tranquil temperament.

Tricotrin stood unseen, watching him in his solitude; and his eyes grew full of pity as he did so. He saw that this aristocrat amidst his greatness was as weary and as desolate as a royal prisoner of state.

'Ah, Estmere!' he murmured half aloud. 'After all, how much happier am I than you!'

An impulse moved him to go within, to touch the hand that lay so listlessly beside the dishes of gold, to break the solitude that amidst so much grandeur was lonely as peasants never are alone.

But though of a nature usually impulsive, he restrained the desire now; he remained quiet while gazing through the screen of foliage.

'I wish I could avenge him,' he thought. 'Four years have gone by, but the poisoned wound rankles still.'

He turned away at length, after a long look, through which the man he watched never changed his position, but sat motionless and lost in thought, in the midst of his painted and velvet-hung chamber, on whose magnificence the noon-sunlight of France was streaming.

'Ah, Mistigri!' murmured Tricotrin, as he passed out down the gardens, the one end of his visit thither accomplished. 'Mine is the better choice. He is a prince in the purples, but under his ermine throbs the jagged nerve, wrenched by a vile wife's dishonour. You and I are happier, little one. If he have his grapes in a jewelled dish, we

take ours out of their own vine-leaves, fresh from the vintage-feast. If he drink his burgundy under the shadow of costly frescoes, we drink ours under the green roofing of summer trees. If he have delicate patrician cheeks and hair diamond-studded to toy with, we have cheeks that bloom from the sun and the wind, and hair wreathed with the forest flowers. If he be great—we enjoy! Ours is the better portion, Mistigri. The only man happy is the man who is free. And the only man free is the man who is at once philosopher and wanderer. "Sans pays, sans prince, et sans lois!" His country, the world,—his prince, his art,—his law, his conscience and his choice!'

And he went on, chanting once more the gay chant of the *Diogène* through the wooded slopes and down the terraces, while the distant joyous echo of his voice reached faintly to the ear of the solitary noble who sat within.

He heard it; and drew a deep breath that was almost a sigh.

'How carelessly that song sounds!' he thought. 'Some vintager or forester, I suppose,—but surely a man who is happy!

And the great man in his palace envied the careless singer.

CHAPTER V.

BY the side of the Loire, on a wooded rock, stood a quaint little old building, picturesque, aged, cloister-like yet cottage-like, with an abundance of ivy clothing it from roof to base, in which so many thousand birds made their home that in the early summer the place seemed one mass of fluttering wings and joyous voices. Half of it had been knocked to ruins in the Fronde ; the other half was worth very little, save to artists who loved its quaint nooks and angles, and the splendour of the panorama which stretched before it, of river and plain, hill and vineyard, with the towers and terraces of Villiers afar off in the golden distance.

One of its gables held an oval deep-embrasured window, whose glass had long since perished and been replaced by coils of ivy hanging down across the aperture. The oval hole was high

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in air, in the topmost stones of the coping, beneath its red high sloping roof; but it served like a frame for a young face that looked out from it very often. The face of a woman-child of fifteen; a face with the richest of fair tints, with a beautiful scarlet mouth whose corners curled upward, with great dark eyes that were black with the soft glowing darkness of the antelope's, with a profusion of fair hair tossed backward, and tied with a blue filet, to fall all over her shoulders at its own will.

It was a very lonely part of the river-side; the turrets of Villiers were only visible on a sunny day, and there were nothing but vineyards and peasant-proprieties for leagues around. Yet there had been no lack of the warmest, if not the most flattering, speakers, to tell the child of her beauty.

The old ferryman, who would let her float for hours in his broad lumbering boat; the country people, who when they passed her on their way to market would check their mules and give her their largest eggs, brightest fruit, sweetest honey; the vine-labourers, who would look up to catch a glance from her as they went to their work among the grapes; all who came near her caressed her, spoiled her, lavished on her all the kindliness and enthusiasm of their nation, and christened her wherever she went 'Le sourire de la Loire'—'La Fille des Fées.' And the smile of the beautiful laughing river, beside whose banks all her short

life had passed, seemed caught on her face in its sunlight and radiance where she looked out from the gloom of the oval embrasure.

She was listening with eager expectant pleasure, in the stillness of the summer afternoon. All was quiet: her friend the ferryman was mending an old brown sail under the shade of his cottage, and the boat itself was motionless casting a long shadow across the water. Some way off, some children in little blue blouses were playing under a sycamore with a great gourd they could hardly roll. Very far down the stream there was a barge, drifting lazily, with a load of hay on which the men who had mown it were stretched, sound asleep in the calm and the heat.

At every point where her eyes glanced there was a picture of exquisite colour, and light, and variety.

But the scene in its loveliness was so old to her, so familiar, that it was scarcely lovely; only monotonous. With all a child's usual ignorant impatience of the joys of the present—joys so little valued at the time, so futilely regretted in the after-years—she was heedless of the hour's pleasure, she was longing for what had not come.

Round a bend in the river a rowing boat came in sight. The long straight stroke of oars in powerful hands sent the little thing swiftly forward with pleasant and even pace. At times it loitered while the

rower let his sculls lie at rest and gazed in peaceful indolence down the rush of the stream. At times he brought it onward, gently and easily, down the rapid current through the hot and fragrant day, between the landscapes of the vine-hung banks. Every now and then, from under the shade of his sombrero, his eyes glanced up at the distant cottage smothered in its chestnuts and its cork-trees; and with the ripple of the waters his voice sung to the rhythm of a Venice barcarolle a rowing song of Turkish boatmen. The Allah hu ! of the Golden Horn went echoing softly over the width of the Loire; and the bargemen looked up from their indolent rest in the hay, and the children left off their game with the gourd, and the old ferryman dropped the heavy end of his sail to shade his eyes from the sun with one hand, as they heard the song, and saw the boat, and smiled with one accord :—for it was Tricotrin.

The child saw and heard too; laughed with delight; balanced herself with an upward agile spring till her foot rested on the stone coping of her window-seat ; and leaping lightly down off the jutting stones, that formed a sort of crazed and crumbling irregular stairway from her casement to the ground, ran as fleetly as a young deer down the slope to the river-bank, and reached it just as the boat-keel grated there.

'Viva !'

He passed his hand over her hair with a tender

caress as she threw her arms about him with the abandonment and welcome of an ardent, graceful child, lifting her lovely mouth, like a red camellia bud, up for the kiss which he gave it lightly.

'Viva!' he cried, 'of a surety you have the most inherent pertinacity in living of any creature ever born! Nothing but a chamois—or a Waif—could have sprung down that wall by the jutting stones. You have a marvellous trick of thriving on what would have killed any other. Still—*tant va la cruche à l'eau*, &c. Take care!'

Viva laughed up in his face.

'If I had fallen, *you* would have been there! What matter then?'

'But—I may not be "there" always! Do not lean on a reed, little one. To depend on another is to walk upon crutches: and the best crutch is but a sorry exchange for sound limbs. Ah! Mistigri wants to get at you; take her. And you have been well all this while?'

'Why! I am always well!' laughed the child in the exultant security of her own perfect strength and health. 'I do not think I know what pain is. But for what a long time you have been away! I thought you would never come!'

Tricotrin shrugged his shoulders:

'Mignonne,—I cannot let even a Waif be a tie. I have enjoyed myself; and so have you, I do not doubt?'

'Oh, I enjoy myself,' answered the child with a certain disdain for the fact. 'But Adêle says it is "provincial" to enjoy.'

'And who may this kill-joy and cynic of an Adêle be, I pray you?'

'She is at the convent;—a noble's daughter,' said the Waif, still clinging to him with one hand, while she held Mistigri with the other. 'But I forgot—you must be tired; you must want to eat?'

'Tired?—no. Hungry?—yes. I have been rowing three leagues, and have had only a draught of red wine on the way. Have you anything in your larder, little one?'

'Oh yes! There is some galette, and plenty of chestnuts; and a guinea-hen, though I am afraid she is a little old, and some fruit.'

'Enough! It is a supper for a king.'

'You will come in now?'

'To get it?—yes. To eat it?—*pas si bête!* Never spend time in-doors when you can spend it out-of-doors. Stay. Run and bring me something, while I fasten the boat. Grand'mère is washing, I see; that is a sacred and solemn business. Tell her I will see her later on, when the linen shall have reposed in peace.'

The child rushed off on her errand, the cloud of her fair hair flying behind her on the wind, to where the little figure of the old peasant woman, older but

none the less active, bent over a great washing-tub among the scarlet-flowering beans of her garden. Grand'mère had grown deaf, and the height of the beans had prevented her seeing the arrival.

Tricotrin dragged his boat up on the bank, high and dry upon the grass, fastened it to a tree, and had only just finished tying the rope when his Waif returned with both hands laden; the sunshine like a halo of gold round her head, her face beaming with delight, and the warmth of the day, and the kiss of the wind.

'This is all I can find. Will that do? That grey cat of Sarazin's has stolen the fowl,' she cried, as he hastened to take her burden from her, with the courtesy he would sooner have omitted to a queen than to a foundling.

'Do? It is a meal for the gods! But you are feminine, Viva; it is not for you to serve me.'

'I would serve none *but* you.'

'Verily? Then you are wrong, my child. You should serve all the old and the poor. Nevertheless, I thank you for your preference. And now — let us go to your favourite tree.'

The tree was at some little distance from the cottage where he had placed his Waif and her guardian, — a huge old beech-tree with wide-stretching arms of shelter and welcome, and moss-lined couches in the depths of its great trunk, and abovehead a broad crown of fresh green leaf. The

tree stood some way from the river, yet close enough for all the babble of the water to be heard amidst the deep-grown woodland wilderness that surrounded it; woodland ending only where the vineyards met it.

And here, in the hollows of the massive boles, was the Waif's favourite throne; a throne where the child would sit through many sunny hours, watching the birds' flight, and the movement of the insects in the blue depths of the aconite and the purple glories of the gorgeous belladonna; a throne without one care in its eminence, one cruelty in its embrace.

Twelve years had passed by since the Waif had been found amongst the clematis; and those twelve years had been full of the long, sweet, spontaneous pleasures of childhood. True, she lived simply in a river-side cottage, with an old and unlearned woman for her only companion, whose chief cares were the eternal wants of the soup-pot, and the health of the hens scratching in the garden. But then, that old woman loved her with a passionate and most tender adoration; that cottage, with its little chambers which were like so many interiors of Teniers, and Van Tol's, was the only home she knew. Fruits and flowers, and the singing of birds and of waters, and the picturesque life of the vine-fields, and the plenteous joy of the harvests, made up the golden sum of her young days. And from the night-time, when she fell asleep in her little white

nest under the eaves, with prayers muttered above her, to the sunrise when she awoke, full of eagerness for the unworn innocent hours that the mere sense of existence made sweet to her as they are sweet to the young birds thrusting themselves forth in the spring-tide, Viva had led the pure bright life of a child in the country, and been happy in it as only children are.

She had thriven with marvellous perfection, as though in rebellion against the fate that had cast her out to perish. She had grown in grace and strength on her hard brown bread and her draughts of goat's milk, as kings' daughters will not thrive in palaces. She had sprung up radiant, lovely, laughing, fearless, under the shelter of the crumbling roof, as a plume of golden rod will blossom under the leaning wall of a ruin. And he who had first taken pity on her, had never since that hour deserted her.

He had seen her at intervals,—widely distant ones for several years, closer to each other as she grew older; but wherever he wandered, however long he was absent, the old dame Virelois was always certain that twice in the year would come, as sure as seed-time and reaping-time, the sum which he had promised her, to succour her poverty and maintain the Waif.

The child knew her history; he forbade her to be kept in secret of it. Nothing had ever been learned that could give a clue to the origin of her

birth, or the motive of her abandonment; and Viva, fed on fairy-lore by her foster-mother, believed herself devoutly the offspring of elfin loves. She delighted to think herself not wholly mortal.

Any sense of shame, or of desolation, had never been permitted to touch her; and the kindly-natured peasantry of the district, sharing a little too in her own view of her fairy-parentage, caressed her, admired her, and treated her with a sort of homage that was due, partly to her own exceeding beauty, and partly to the reverent love in which they held her protector; and which did its uttermost to turn her childish head with vanity and wilfulness, and persuade her that she was of very different mould to the common, sun-burnt, toil-marked clay around her. For Viva, —a waif and stray, nameless and homeless, found wrapped in a bit of red serge, and saved by a monkey stretching out a little horny, black hand, —was as proud as though the blood of all the Cæsars had warmed her clear rosy cheeks.

The pride was fostered in her by many things; by the adulation of Grand'mère, who incessantly fondled her, as something beyond earth in her loveliness; by the deference, of the few people whom she ever saw, to the charms and caprices of her graceful infancy; by the ignorance even of her own origin, which left her parentage a blank that could be filled up by imagination with every gorgeous and wondrous picture. This wayward and baseless pride had been

nourished by every creature who approached her, save one; and that one Viva loved better than all others.

All the child's affectionate, wayward, contradictory little soul spent itself in love for Tricotrin. All she had that pleased her,—the blue ribbon for her hair, the bonbons in their silvered papers, the music that told her such entrancing fables of unknown worlds, the pretty ivory chain that hung round her neck which was as white as itself,—all came to her from his hands. For though without riches himself, he could give what seemed riches to the fancy of a young lonely creature; and he who abhorred a tie—even a tie of love—had grown to feel an irresistible fondness for the thing whose life he had saved. Such fondness as was but an instinct with the warm, liberal, compassionate heart of the man for a being so utterly dependent on him.

The life that lay behind him had been filled with many loves. His painter's eyes and poet's fancy had seen beauty in many female forms, under the suns of many lands; but nothing purer, and in its way, nothing deeper, had ever touched him than the tenderness that he had given his Waif. He had saved her as he would have saved a wood-pigeon from the trap, a hare from the netted snare, and had thought to concern himself no more with her than with the pigeon that flew, or with the hare that fled, away from him, rejoicing in release. But in his own

fashion Tricotrin, who acknowledged no law but his conscience, obeyed what he deemed duty, even when obedience went hardly against him; and, to his own thinking, having brought this existence out from the death that had been assigned to it, he had a right bound upon him to see how it fared, and into what semblance it grew.

He loved the vine countries well, and with most grape-harvests came to them. Thus he had never wholly lost sight of his foundling; and Viva adored him with a passionate faith and reverence that she yielded to no one else, and which was rather increased than diminished by the rarity of his presence and the uncertainty of his visits. For these invested him in Viva's eyes with the grandeur of a king in disguise, and the miraculous advent of one who was not as other men are.

On the whole, the Waif fared better, having fallen to the hands of a vagabond-philosopher, than if she had drifted to those of a respected philanthropist. The latter would have had her glistening hair shorn short, as a diadem with which that immoral and inconsistent socialist Nature had no justification in crowning a foundling; and, in his desire to make her fully expiate the lawless crime of entering the world without purse or passport, would have left her no choice, as she grew into womanhood, save that between sinning and starving. The former bade the long fair tresses float on the air, sunny rebels against

bondage, and saw no reason why the childhood of the cast-away should not have its share of childish joyousness as well as the childhood prince-begotten and palace-cradled; holding that the fresh life just budded on earth was as free from all soil, no matter whence it came, as is the brook of pure rivulet-water, no matter whether it springs from classic lake or from darksome cavern.

'A meal for the gods!' said Tricotrin, taking out the contents of Viva's basket. 'Figs, pears, a melon, and white bread! Why, extravagant one, what were you dreaming of, to apologize for such a fair feast? Horace could not have wanted a better. This is my *fiambreras*, as the good Knight of Mancha phrased it. But the Don consoled himself for short commons with a long name and a vast show. We are wiser than that. We have the fruits of the earth, without bombast—'

'I wish there were something better though! That cat is such a thief!' said the Waif with a sigh, looking down on him from where she was sitting aloft in the curved trunk of the huge beech-tree.

'Better? foolish child! Ask Mistigri. There could be nothing better when I add my flask of wine, which it never does to leave to chance. Here is honey, sweet as that of Hymettus; bread to be the prose of corn to the poetry of fruit; and Rhenish that Schiller loved, with all the Rhine legends steeped in it. I would not change these, for all the

cooks whose art consists in leaving you in ignorance as to whether you are eating fish, flesh, or fowl. And now, since it is no fun to look on at others' meals, and you say you have had your own, try some bonbons, *ma mie!*'

He tossed upward to her as he spoke several bright-coloured packets of sweetmeats, gilded and silvered in the floral French fashion; and Viva caught each in its turn with a laugh of delight. She had just fifteen years, but she was a true child in heart, and if her mother had been a fairy, that fairy must have been French.

'I am glad they please you,' said Tricotrin, looking up to catch the smile on her face where it beamed down on him through the beech-leaves. 'Up at Blois last night Madame Dentrée's daughter was married. There was a grand bridal feast, of course. She has wedded well, to a rich young tanner of Sevres, and I played for them till the dawn. *Dieu!* how they danced!—all those young men and maidens. The mother was pleased, and this morning she would have emptied half her bonbon-shop on me for you. She is a good woman, the Dentrée, and a rich tanner is a son-in-law to put one in good humour.'

'I have never been to Blois,' murmured the Waif, bending over her cornucopias of sweetmeats, which, though she would not have said so, were a

little embittered to her by being the gifts of a pastry-cook.

'No. Keep out of cities while you can. The range of old Sarazin's ferry-boat is far enough for your wanderings at present. And how do you agree with the Sisters?'

'I hate them!' said the child, with flashing eyes.

'And wherefore?'

'Oh!—they hate me,' murmured Viva.

'Indeed? Then I fear you must deserve it?'

'I dare say I do. They are so silent, so lifeless, so cold, so grey; there is no good in them! I love light, warmth, laughter, colour,—*you* know!—and they talk folly, they say these are all vanity, that life should be one long psalm of humility, and denial, and sacrifice. Bah! it would be like living to wear tight bands of irons!'

'And you have a preference for rose-chains? Well—you and the Sisters look at life with the difference of eyes that have only been open for fifteen years, and eyes that have ached wearily for forty-five. A great contrast in vision,—that!'

'But *you* are forty-five?'

'And more. But I am a man, and any man who is not a fool or a criminal, can keep youth in him all the days of his life. But women!—and women behind the iron bars of a grating! But you

only go to the convent to learn, Viva; why should you vex your soul at captivity you do not share?'

'Why?' replied the child, her pretty glad voice growing swifter and more eager. 'They are for ever rebuking me,—not for learning; I *will* learn, though I abhor it, because you wish me, and because you say that knowledge is power,—but for frivolity as they call it, and impetuosity, and wilfulness, and giddiness, and pride! They tell me I should be patient, and quiet, and lowly in mind, and as one in servitude always; that I have no right to be proud, and ought to think a vine-dresser as good as myself; that to be plain and virtuous is lovelier to God than to be handsome and wayward as I am!—that—oh! I could tell you for hours the tedious things that they lecture me on!—'

'Humph! So you are conscious of beauty, waywardness, pride, and frivolity, my friend? A nice quartette of qualities? "Know thyself," said the sage; certainly you obey him.'

'But that is not all!' cried Viva, with burning cheeks, and eyes to which proud passionate tears started. 'There are two or three children there—that Adêle is one of them, a Count's daughter!—and they are awkward, and heavy, and ungraceful in everything, yet they think themselves above *me!* And they are rude—very rude—Grand'mère says because they are jealous of me; and they laughed in my face when I told them my mother was a fairy,

and they twit me with having no name, with being only—as they say—a *thing* that is called Viva, like a cat or a dog!'

She threw back her head while she uttered the words that had wounded her, as though in haughty repellence of their power to sting. Nor indeed did they pierce with the humiliation she would have felt had she not been guarded from all knowledge of possible shame in her birth, and had not her fancy-fed imagination genuinely believed the fantastic story of fairy origin, that Grand'mère had woven to satisfy her eager questionings without pain.

Tricotrin looked up at her, and a smile of tender and infinite pity came on his lips.

'So soon!' he murmured to himself. 'They might let you enjoy your bright brief dawn; it will swiftly be over! So the children cast shame ere they should know what shame is! We cannot wonder at the great world, then.'

'Viva mine,' he said aloud at length. 'As for the Sisters' offences, they are nothing,—the good women mean well by you, and you have such wilfulness and pride, *ma mie,* that you may well bear with some few sermons on your besetting sin. But for the rest, since you are proud, do you not know that the proud never let the barbed shafts of malicious tongues wound them? The words which hurt you are words of jealous mouths, you think; well, do you

not know that jealousy is, and has been from all time, a liar and a slanderer ?'

The child looked softly at him.

'But it is *true?* I have no name? I am not as others are ?'

The fairy fabric of her elfin birth, although so devoutly and innocently believed in, was not wholly proof against the scoff and the taunt which had moved her. Already Viva was beginning to feel the power of that impalpable tyrant of 'the world'—embodied for her in the small form of a little French girl, with a shrill mocking voice, and a '*de la*' appended to her name in voucher of nobility.

Tricotrin looked at her with pitying tenderness.

'Not as others? Why, my Waif? Is your foot less swift, your limb less strong, your face less fair, than theirs? Does the sun shine less often, have the flowers less fragrance, does sleep come less sweetly, to you than to them? Nature has been very good, very generous to you, Viva. Be content with her gifts. What you lack is only a thing of man's invention, a quibble, a bauble, a pharisee's phylactery. Look at the river-lilies that drift yonder, how white they are, how their leaves enclose and caress them, how the water buoys them up and plays with them! Well? are they not better off than the poor rare flowers that live painfully in hot-house air, and are labelled, and matted, and given long names by men's petty precise laws? You are

like the river-lilies; oh, child! do not pine for the glass-house that would ennoble you, only to force you, and kill you!'

Viva smiled, following with quick fancy the picturesque metaphor; but she was not wholly content to be a river-flower, she wanted to bloom under the silver spray of palace fountains: she hung her graceful head on one side, in half arch, half pensive, meditation.

'But—it is not pleasant to have no name. Only a nickname that means nothing; like the kitten Bébé, like the cock Roi Doré?—'

Tricotrin's humorous smile laughed on his lips; he had struck on a vein of amused thought that wandered away from herself.

'Is it not?' he laughed in answer. 'Ask Bébé and Roi Doré;—they will tell you that so long as the voices they love call them, and the name serves to summon them to good food and good drink, it answers every purpose that a king's string of titles can do. Bah! little one! Be more of a philosopher. A name is a handle only; if the pot go soundly to the well, and if it bring back cool pure water for thirsty mouths, what matter how the handle be fashioned?'

Viva, accustomed to follow and catch the fantastic meanings of his phrases, knew well what he meant, but was not prepared to be convinced by it: she had a strongly developed will of her own.

'That may be,' she said, with a charming mutinous pout of her lovely lips. 'Still—when one is a pretty porcelain pot it is ugly to have a broken osier handle, and to only go to the well as if one were of brown old earthenware?'

Tricotrin laughed more and more.

'So you think yourself of pretty porcelain, my dainty little bit of Sèvres? oh-hè! Well! I will warrant you will never be of so much use to others as if you were a homely brown pipkin. But to be proud of your uselessness is a thing that has not my sympathies.'

The child coloured; conscious of the satire and of the rebuke.

'There is no pipkin that would not change, and be porcelain, if it could!' she murmured, with a certain pleading petulance.

'Well—that does not say much for the good sense of the pipkins then, if it be true. But I don't think it is true. There is many a sturdy, honest, sensible pipkin that would rather be going to the well, twenty times a day, to have the children's thirsty throats, and the hot window-flowers, and the poor chained dogs, and the little feverish birds in cages, all grateful to it, and made happy by what it brings, than it would be a porcelain trifle, standing all the year round in a velvet-lined cabinet, only valued for the paint on its glaze, and liable any minute to be bought and sold as a chattel. *I* would rather be

the pipkin, Viva; but you, I suppose, sigh for captivity and idleness among a collector's bric à brac?'

The child laughed too, but she gave a little quick sigh, and a hot flush for her chidden vanity and her own sense of its unwisdom.

'But is it so wrong to be proud?' she asked, dropping, female-like, the pipkin and porcelain symbol, so soon as she found it tell against her own argument.

'Proud? In what way, Viva?'

'Any way! To be impatient of grand'mère's friends because they talk such bad patois, and are only old ignorant women! To burn with hatred, and jealousy, and evil, at my first communion, because that Adêle had a wreath on of real silver, and scoffed at my beautiful lilies and lilacs because they were only real flowers!—'

'"*Only!*"' murmured Tricotrin.

'To be full of wrath with dear old grand'mère because she will bake, and wash, and sweep, though I know it is so good of her to do it! To be wayward and bitter, and long to avenge, when the children talk at me as though I were a peasant! To loathe to confess it when I know I am wrong; to long for sovereignty, and supremacy, and luxury, and power; to feel I would die rather than serve; and to disdain anything that is poor, and ugly, and meek, and without grace! Oh, proud in all ways and at all hours!'

Tricotrin smiled as he heard her self-accusation, but he looked at her mournfully.

'Viva mine, you are not a philosopher: but it is a little early perhaps for that, and besides, nothing feminine ever was, I suppose. Wrong to be proud, you ask? No. But then the pride must be of a right fashion. It must be the pride which says, "Let me not envy, for that were meanness. Let me not covet, for that were akin to theft. Let me not repine, for that were weakness." It must be the pride which says, "I can be sufficient for myself. My life makes my nobility. And I need no accident of rank, because I have a stainless honour." It must be pride, too proud to let an aged woman work where youthful limbs can help her; too proud to trample basely on what lies low already; too proud to be a coward, and shrink from following conscience in the confession of known error; too proud to despise the withered, toil-worn hands of the poor and old, and be vilely forgetful that those hands succoured you in your utmost need of helpless infancy!'

The sweet, melodious tones of his voice, that grew infinitely gentle, almost solemn, as the last words left his lips, went straight to the loving, wayward heart of the child they rebuked. She threw herself down beside him in lowly passionate repentance; her fair face burning with contrition, her mouth trembling, her eyes brimming with great tears.

'Oh yes, yes! If they would only speak *so* I would listen! I am wrong, I am rebellious, I am wicked, and I care too much for the things that are vain; but, indeed, indeed, I am never ungrateful!'

Tricotrin, who would at any moment have sooner faced a flaming city, or a swarming barricade, than seen the tears of anything feminine, above all of anything he loved, passed his hand over her hair with a caress.

'To be sure not!' he said, cheerily. 'No one suspects you of such baseness! As for your desire for sovereignty,—believe me there is none like the royalty of youth. Rejoice in that kingdom whilst it is yours; it will pass from you all too soon. And, for "the things that are vain,"—you are feminine, as I say, and must love them I suppose according to your sex. But if you think a wreath of beaten-out metal produced from a jeweller's workshop, equals the lilies and lilacs of a spring-blossoming earth, why,—you are no artist, my Waif, but a creature of acquired tastes, and innate vulgarities, as, judging by their choice of apparelling, I often fear that all women are!'

The child laughed, but her tears were still on her long, curling lashes, and the words he had spoken had sunk into her heart.

She was silent, and he let her be so while she lay at his feet, her arms cushioned on the moss,

and her head drooped on her hands, in the unconscious grace of a young resting stag.

'Proud as a queen, and among the base-born. Lovely as the dawn, and without a mother or a name. Willing to perish rather than yield, and a woman! It needs no horoscope to cast her fate!' murmured Tricotrin in English to the monkey, the language being one unintelligible to Viva, though familiar to him. 'Ah Mistigri, Mistigri! shall you and I ever be reproached at the last? Had we better have let the thread of life be broken at the onset than have saved it to reel out, all glistening gold at first, all knotted tangles at the end? Porcelain?—yes! Such delicate, dainty, bright-hued porcelain! And how will it come out from the furnace?'

A certain sadness touched him where he sat under the broad beech boughs, with the fruit and the bread for his noon-tide meal. He loved her well, loved her with patient and most gentle tenderness; but he knew neither whence she came nor whither she went—this young life that he had rescued—and it was possible that the time might dawn for both when each would deem it had been well if she had never awakened from her infant's sleep among the clematis.

'Want a palace while there is a forest! Little stupid! What a thoroughly feminine animal you are, preferring the artificial to the natural—the

lesser thing that is unobtainable to the greater thing that lies in your path!' he cried suddenly, rousing himself and the child from their mutual reverie.

'A wood is very nice!' said Viva with her head on one side glancing under the boughs that had flung their green and welcome shadows on her through all the summers since she had been first trusted to their shelter as a Waif. 'But—oh! to see those palaces of Paris! What would I give—'

'Your soul, little simpleton, to learn the madness of your barter too late!' he thought, as he answered her aloud:

'A wood "nice"? Bah! you are a Goth, Viva mine. Why, there is nothing so beautiful on earth as the rich virgin growth of wild trees. Look yonder!—the squirrels flitting everywhere, the kingfishers over that pool, the huge boughs all moss-draped, the glimpses of green distance just caught between the branches, the exquisite stillness and freshness and loveliness! What would gilded rooms and marble stairways give in fit exchange for that? Wise was Scipio to leave the heat, and noise, and legions, and tumult, and clangour, of the mistress of the world for the cool green shade of his leafy solitudes!'

'Wise? Oh no!'

'And why "oh no"? you who condemn Scipio?'

The child laughed: she had little historic knowledge, little knowledge indeed of any sort, but she

had caught up some stray gleams of classicisms from Tricotrin at intervals.

'Why? Well! Because I would rather have perished in my prime amidst all the dignities of Roman rule than have lived threescore years in retirement.——'

'Qui respiciunt ad pauca de facili pronunciant,' interpolated her companion with Aristotelian terseness.

'I detest Latin!' said Viva, with the pretty disdainful gesture of a spoiled child who hated her paternosters. 'But,—I should love to be great, and I do not believe Philosophy can ever be sweet and grand like Power!'

'I do not suppose you do. Philosophy never was popular with your sex, who always go by externals.'

'They must be the surest test to go by,' said the child quickly. 'If a thing *look* very handsome it is as good as *being* handsome, is it not?'

'Oh you young sophist! So you are content with appearances? A bad indication that. Philosophy, Viva, is the pomegranate of life, ever cool and most fragrant, and the deeper you cut in it the richer only will the core grow. Power is the Dead Sea apple, golden and fair to sight while the hand strives to reach it; dry grey ashes between dry fevered lips when once it is grasped and eaten. Now you, my friend, having tasted neither, decide

without a moment's hesitation between them; while men who have steeped all their lives in one, or another, die without having been able to settle the selection!'

'Still'—persisted the child with a laugh at herself, and she paused in her sentence, for in the forest-track, which bent round through the trees within sight, came some six or eight riders, who caught the eager fancy and the wondering eyes of the Waif.

Her river-side home stood in such complete loneliness that, save for the craft that passed up the Loire, nothing gladdened her sight from season to season save the droves of the cattle or the market-mules of the peasants. Her thoughts of the beauty of power and the charms of magnificence were purely innate in her; she had never seen anything whatsoever to suggest them; and she stood now gazing at the party as they advanced, with as entranced a delight as though she beheld some celestial vision such as she read of in the books at the convent.

They were returning from hawking in the far-reaching woods of Villiers, and were going leisurely, after some successful casts at herons, with all the customary trappings of green and scarlet and gold, of attendants in the picturesque forester-costume, of noble hounds panting and triumphant, of, in a word, all the costly panoply of French falconery revived in

its utmost magnificence. Breaking suddenly, like a Louis Quatorze hawking picture put into motion, on the woodland solitude around her, they looked to Viva like some group called up by enchantment: she stood breathless, a beautiful picture herself, with her feet ankle-deep in cyclamen and mosses, her hair flying backward in the wind like two golden wings, and her head crowned with a green wreath of oak leaves and maidenhair that she had woven as she had talked.

With one accord the eyes of all the riders turned on her, in amazed admiration, as they passed by through the forest-way. Some called a gay greeting out to her; all gave her the homage of bold ardent eyes; one alone uncovered his head as he passed her and bowed low in deference to her sex.

He was the last rider of all; a tall, slender, stately man, with a haughty carriage and a fair-hued face, grave almost to melancholy.

They were gone like the breath of the wind, lost to sight in a turn of the path; but Viva stood, still entranced; with a scarlet glow on her cheeks and her eyes full of delight and desire.

She turned breathlessly to Tricotrin.

'Who is *he?*'

'Which *he*, petite?'—he had watched the horsemen pass without rising from his leaning posture beneath the beech.

'The one who bowed to me?'

'Why that one in especial, Viva? There were others much younger to pleasure you.'

'But he only did *that!* Besides,—they all looked noble, but he alone looked great!'

'Creditable to your discernment, Viva. He *is* great—and he is as tired as ever Scipio was!'

'But his name?' persisted the child.

'His name? Well,—Eustace Estmere.'

'Estmere? And what is he?'

'You have said—a great man. Repeat your *exaudi nos* for him, Viva.'

'He cannot want it? He looks strong?'

'The strong suffer.'

'But so proud too?'

'And the proud suffer more.'

Viva gave a heavy sigh:

'How I shall suffer then!' she murmured. 'But does he live here? How is it I have never seen him?'——

'He owns Villiers; but he is rarely there; and it is four good leagues away.'

'He *owns* Villiers!'

To Viva it made him as a monarch; once, once only, one fête-day, Grand'mère had taken her to see Villiers; one summer-time when the people were permitted free range over the park and the gardens and the terraces, down the dim never-ending splendid galleries, and through the orangeries and the palm houses and the wilderness of flowers: the glories of

Villiers had never ceased to haunt her imagination, though it too rarely came within range of her friend Sarazin's boat for her to have had a second chance of beholding this Versailles of her province. The man who could own it looked to Viva as the sovereign of France.

'And he bowed to *me!*' she repeated softly and exultantly under her breath.

'Chut, Viva!' interrupted Tricatrin something impatiently. 'In what does the bow of a noble differ from that of a peasant?—it is a chivalry to your sex in both, nothing more! Your Lord Estmere and I are appropriate symbols to accompany my pomegranate metaphor. He is power: I am philosophy. I lie at my ease on a bed of mosses that have not a thorn; I find their true taste in plain bread and purple grapes; I am without bond and without burden; I take no thought for the morrow; my mind is my kingdom and mankind are my brethren; where I will there I go, and I have none to dictate to me. Now my lord there!—he wears the purple robe, with the steel corslet heavy beneath; he sleeps on palace-beds, and state care lies down with him; he is the proudest man of his order, and his honour is strong to the quick where he cannot shield it; the garter ribbon crosses his breast, and his heart aches under it with a pain never quiet: he is a great man, *ergo* he is never free, wherever he goes thither comment and curiosity

follow him, and no sorrow can be sacred that befalls him, because the chattering world must have it as prey. I have the Pomegranate: he has the Dead Sea apple. And yet—so eternal is the duello between philosophy and power, and so little will either of those rivals yield to the other, that I would wager he would no more change places with me than I would change places with him!'

And Tricotrin, who in those words had forgotten the child he addressed, sank back again among his mosses with a laugh on his lips,—a laugh infinitely humorous, something tender, and a little, ever so little, sad.

Viva did not answer; the young aspirant to Power remained unconvinced.

CHAPTER VI.

'YOU are content with the little angel, Tricotrin?' asked Grand'mère Virelois that evening in the porch of the river-side house which she owed to him.

'As little of an angel as may be,' said Tricotrin. 'But I am as content with her as man ever can be with a feminine thing; which is not much to say. I am well content with your care of her, if you mean that, good friend. The child thrives as—nothing but a waif whom nobody wants ever could do.'

'Ah, Tricotrin! everybody wants her who sees her. She is as beautiful as the morning.'

'Oh yes,' murmured Tricotrin; 'and the young tribunes will shout *ad leones!* and she will get flung down in the sands of the Circus, "butchered to make a *Parisian* holiday"!'

'Paris?' repeated Grand'mère, catching but one word she knew. 'You mean to take her to Paris?'

'Certainly not; but she will take herself some day, no doubt.'

Grand'mère sighed heavily. Paris was a word of terror to her. She had never been out of her own grape-country; but it was there, yonder in Paris, that the marble block, lifted up to adorn a palace, had fallen, and crushed into a shapeless mass the noble young form of her first-born son; it was there also that, amidst the blood and the smoke of the barricades of the Thirty Days, the youngest mouth that had once lisped its prayers at her knee had murmured with its dying whisper, '*N'en dis rien à ma mère.*'

'Paris! Paris!' muttered the old woman, whirling her spinning-wheel, with the evening light about her in the old oaken doorway; 'God forbid the child should get to Paris. What could she do but perish there?'

Tricotrin smoked in silence. It was never his way to disturb himself concerning the future. It was waste of thought and time, he considered. Rattle your dice how you would, you could never tell what the throw would be; unless, indeed, you turned gamester, and weighted the ivory of circumstance with the lead of dishonesty: which was not in his manner of dealing.

'Do you know, Tricotrin,' continued Grand'mère, 'do you know, I often wonder what her fate will be, the precious child! You see, I am eighty-three next month; I have not very many more years before me; and she is so young, and you—good as you are—are not really her father. What will become of the little one? I may die any day, and you—you wander so far, you are away so long! What would become of the Viva if I died in your absence?'

'Never ask what will become of anything, Grand'mère. It shows a curiosity highly unphilosophic; and very impertinent, too, in a good woman like you, who thinks Providence looks after every little detail, from an earthquake that kills ten thousand people, to the nail that tears the slit in your blue gown. What will become of the world? Nobody knows. If it disappear to-morrow it will not be missed in the universe. "There is a falling star; look at it, my dear!" some man in Jupiter will say to his wife. That will be all the world's monody.'

'You will ever jest, Tricotrin,' said the old woman, with a little shudder over her spinning-wheel. If he were the Wandering Jew, as some said, who knew but what he might have the mission of the world's sudden extinction to execute!

'I do not care about the world!' she resumed, 'I have lived my time in it, and it is cruel—cruel! But the little treasure has all her time before her;

and look you, my friend, I get anxious as she grows older. While she was a child it was all right enough. Let a child have the sun and the air, and sweet milk, and plenty of love, and a child is happy,—happy on a bare floor and in a wooden cradle. But a young girl is different; and sometimes I wonder what will become of her. She is proud,—she has the ways of a princess,—she is not a creature you can set to scrub, and bake, and sew. Among the flowers, on the water, singing where she sits in the trees, dancing when she hears boats go by with music,—that is Viva's life. But it will not be a good life for womanhood, when there is no name and no mother.'

There was a pathos in the feeble, aged voice, as the speaker shook her head over her wheel, with the sun so bright on her brown face and her white cap, and the brilliant child for whom she feared, fluttering like an oriole in the distance among the scarlet beans and the low apple trees.

True feeling never spoke in vain to Tricotrin. He bent gently and reverently to the bent old figure, while his eyes glanced to the gay form of his Waif.

'Nay, Grand'mère, do not disquiet yourself,' he said, earnestly. 'The child is brave, proud, truthful. These are three grand safeguards against evil. She has much vanity, many caprices, too fond a craze for things out of her reach; but her heart is of gold;

these foibles are but the foibles of sex. For her future, we must leave it. How can we say whither she goes? we, who do not even know whence she came! But I have good faith in the Waif; faith that she will not decline into evil, even if evil tempt her, which it shall never do whilst I live. For the rest, if aught ail you, tell the good women at the convent to look to her. You know that I love no churches; and I was ill-pleased that you steeped the child in the acid and the poison of Creed. Whilst women are nurtured on superstition the men born of them will never reach their full stature. But I let you have your own way in that matter because thus you get shelter for her, and thus you set at ease your own conscience. Let the nuns know if you dread anything for your health; and for the years to come, we must trust Viva herself. If she choose Luxury, having known Love, she will not be worth a regret!'

A certain darkness passed over his face as he spoke. There was that which jarred on him in the child's inborn and ineradicable desires for a different life than that to which he had saved her.

'That is true, Tricotrin,' muttered Grand'mère. 'Still, it is the stars that fall, you know, so fast, so fast, through August nights! And it is just the proud ones who have not gold at the back of pride; it is just the beautiful ones who have but cottage-roofs over their beauty; that Paris devours—devours.

Ah! is she not filled,—that cruel, terrible Paris,—with the flowers of the country, that give their sweetness to her to be trampled dead on the stones of her streets?'

There was a tragic force in the eloquence of the aged withered lips. Grand'mère was a simple, credulous, innocent old woman, who had led her long life ever under the shadows of the vines of her birthplace, but she had suffered,—and beyond all had she never forgotten her youngest-born, whom that beautiful, fearful, resistless Paris had drawn in, in his boyhood, and his ardour, and his fearless faith, and who had been murdered amongst the children of France, when the streets had run with blood in the days of July.

'True!' said Tricotrin, gently. 'Paris is beautiful and she is terrible, very terrible! For in her the highest and the lowest forms of humanity meet; in her the perfection of Pleasure stands side by side with the culmination of Vice. She is beautiful, she is terrible: for she is the epitome of human life. You are right, Grand'mère: none can say what flower she may not draw in—to bloom in unnatural brilliance a moment, and perish of the air that forced it, a trodden thing beneath men's feet!'

'Yes; and therefore the child—'

'Oh! never mind! The child is a child; leave her to the future.. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. Why take thought for her womanhood. Thinking

will not avert it. "If the cucumber be bitter throw it away," says Antoninus. Do the same with a thought.'

'But it is not possible always.'

'Paf! I think it is. There is no cucumber so bitter that honey will not put the taste of it out; and no cucumber so heavy that one cannot throw it over some wall. You have reared her well, Grand'mère, —barring that little touch of church-superstition, which, woman-like, you could not help giving. You have taught her to scorn a lie; you could not arm her with a better shield. Do not disquiet yourself; *you* have done your duty, whatever the issue. There is no nobler crown to a life.'

Grand'mère's brown cheek grew warmer with pleasure; though she was a brave old woman, and cared little for any one, so long as she 'did her duty' in her homely, truthful fashion, she yet always held Tricotrin in a certain awe, as of one endowed with occult and omniscient powers, and it was with infinite relief that she always learned that he commended her.

With these words he left her and joined his Waif, who had just captured a sparkling azure butterfly in her hand.

'You are not going to kill it, Viva?'

'Oh no! only to look at it.'

'Good! The Mussulmans treasure every little torn scrap of paper, because on it there may be

some line of the Koran. So should we cherish every little ephemeral atom of life, because on it, however small, is the impress of God. Jean Paul has had that thought before me. Let the creature go; you wound its delicate wings, and you see it far better winging its way through the sunset glow. There!'

The child lifted her head, and watched it as it flew high through the golden warmth of the young summer evening.

'How I should love to roam like that!' she cried. He smiled a little sadly.

'Impatient bird, to long to quit the nest! Ah, it is always so with the fledglings! The old tree is so dull, the home wood so wearisome, and it looks all summer yonder! They know nothing of the plains of snow, the clouds of thunder, the driving winds, the storms of winter!—'

'But *you* roam?'

'Certainly I do. But I am not a woman.'

'A woman! Because one will be a woman must one never see the world?'

The words were petulant and longing. Viva was happy, but she was not so happy but what she was also a little ill-content. She looked over at that sun-steeped distance, to which the butterfly was taking its flight with all the restlessness of curious desire. What could that 'world' be which lay beyond? It was inborn in the child; that longing for forbidden knowledge; that aspiration after wider spheres.

'Was your mother an empress or a gypsy? Cortés she must have been one or the other,' murmured Tricotrin. 'Nothing else could have given *you* birth. So you want to roam, Viva? And you do nothing all day long but live very much like that butterfly? What ever shall we do with you, little one, in a year or two's time?'

'Take me with you! Let me roam too!' laughed the child, with her arms flung about him in gay pleading caress.

Tricotrin laughed also; then a momentary warmth rose over his face,—for the first time it occurred to him that his Waif, though a child now, would, in a year or two more, be no longer a child; and that, although he filled the place of her father to her, he had no kinship with this bright stray thing, whom, as it seemed to him, he had but the other day found left to die among the clematis.

'That is too much to ask!' he answered merrily, choosing his own thought not to touch her too. 'I carry one thing feminine indeed, but then she is portable and exceedingly small; which you, my Waif, who will be tallest among tall women, never can be. Besides,—the essence of wandering is to wander alone. Oh! I dare say you will find some way of yourself to spread your wings when the time comes; but wait till they are full-grown, Viva, if you take my advice. To flutter a little way and then fall, will not suit you.'

'No, indeed! When I soar at all I will keep above earth like a hawk!'

She tossed her fair head back as she spoke with haughty careless security; she might have been the daughter of some free victorious desert king.

Tricotrin looked at her with earnest scrutiny.

'And forget the lark's nest among the field-grasses that first sheltered you;' he said to himself. 'I dare say! That will be very like youth—and very like womanhood!'

But he did not utter the thought loud enough for her to hear, as he gave a farewell caress with his hand to her sunny brow.

'Well; adieu, for to-day!'

'Must you go? Must you?' pleaded the child, with loving entreaty.

'I must! I have promised Yvon Mascarras to play at his betrothal feast to-morrow, and his place is a dozen leagues from this.'

'But when will you come again?'

'When? How can I say? I will not be long without coming,—unless indeed I go off to the Moon or the Shades,—for you are fair to see, Viva; and since we are both Waifs and Strays it is meet that we cling together.'

'But then—if you love me, you will please me and not go?'

'Ah, ha! You have so much of womanhood in you already that you count the strength of love by

the obedience it gives to your caprices, and exact its confession only also to exact its submission? How true to your sex you are, Viva! Nay—I love you, though I doubt if it be wise to love anything save Mankind and Doghood. And all I hope, Waif of mine, is, that you will never reproach me with having helped you to get out of your bed of clematis. Enjoy, *mignonne*, the utmost you can; the happier you are the less conscience-stricken shall Mistigri and I feel at our connivance with your escape into existence!'

Viva laughed—she always fancied, herself, that the little black Mistigri was a familiar of her own fairy-mother's—and she threw her arms fondly about him once more.

'I am always so happy when you are here, and so good too! Oh! if you never went away I should never have those wicked, envious, wayward thoughts; you are like my guardian angel!'

For she did in truth love him warmly; he stood to her in the stead of father, mother, brother, of home, and of kindred, and of the world; and though the child was vain, and like most children selfish, she had great affection in her, and spent it all on him.

Tricotrin's eyes smiled with exceeding tenderness on her, whilst over the fearless brightness of his face a flash of pleasure passed. So little had he of egotism or exaction, so little did he make count

of his best actions, so quickly was he moved by any gleam of gratitude to him, that he felt himself the debtor of the child who owed him all, because she paid him in the rare coinage of a pure attachment!

'I thank you, Viva mine,' he said softly. 'Make me indeed your guardian angel, by letting my memory exorcise all evil things from your young soul. I ask no higher reward.'

He touched her bright upturned forehead lightly with his lips, in his accustomed caress of greeting and adieu, and left her to unloose his boat from its moorings, and push it off into the stream, whose waters were flushing to violet, and russet, and golden hues beneath the glories of the setting sun.

There was a trail of light across the river, like sheeted gold, into which the small boat glided; his form was full in its lustre as, standing up and wafting it forward with one oar, he uncovered his head to her and laughed a last farewell.

That brilliance was shed still about the figure of the child, waiting upon the bank, among the scarlet flowers, while the boat passed onward into the shadows of the coming night, where the sun-rays did not follow.

CHAPTER VII.

'Nothing she does or seems
But smacks of something greater than herself,
Too noble for this place—'

HE mused, as his thoughts remained with her, while the strokes of his oars swept him away. He had never sought wealth; he was a republican to the core; he loved best the simplest forms of life; he deemed happiest those whose wants were fewest; and lo! in this foundling whom he had protected was a nature in the strongest opposition to all his views, requiring by sheer inborn instinct all that circumstances rendered it totally impossible he could ever give her.

Through the years of her brief existence, he had taken no heed of the child beyond the provision of her actual needs, and the kindly careless gentleness he would have shown to a dog or a cat; he had

never regarded her in the light of a possible burden, a possible difficulty to himself in the time that was to come. The joyous and negligent temper of Tricotrin was not one that regarded the future; to rescue the child had been an impulse with him; that she would ever require more than the few easily granted wants of childhood, that the time would ever come when she would grow impatient of the life she led, had never occurred to him until now that her own words and those of the old woman had suggested the doubt. He was used himself, by choice, to live much amongst the people; his time, by preference, was much passed among the peasantries of divers nations. He was habituated to seeing young girls who were content enough if they got a new ribbon for their hair, or rode queen of a harvest on a bullock-drawn waggon: that the Waif would prove a young rebel, with the pride of a princess and fastidious tastes curiously inherent in her, was an additional perplexity to the whole dilemma of her maintenance.

The flower was fair, and was yet only in its bud; its hereafter had never risen before him as a matter of meditation and of possible future embarrassment. And even now he threw the fear from him: it was free to float on the air in its own happy fashion, sun-kissed and wind-tossed, it bloomed after nature's own will with it, and all its fragrance was natural, like the sweetness of roses;—it was the best thing that

could betide any opening blossom to be left so wholly to Nature. With Nature, therefore, he left too her future.

And he sent his boat up the stream with a swift strong impulsion, shaking the care from his thoughts as he shook the water-drops from his oars : he was likely to be something late for the feast of Yvon Mascarros, and Tricotrin never broke promises even in so small a matter as a vine-dresser's marriage-feast.

Care never waited with him ; it will scarcely ever tarry where it is not entertained with welcome, and the rich sunlit nature of the man had no kinship with it as a guest. There had been times, inevitable in every life, when he had suffered with the intense passion of all vivid characters ; but they had been few and far between, and the gracious gladness of his inherent temper had always resumed supremacy. Not for him the feverish unrest of ambition ; the carking thirst of the seekers of wealth ; the vacillating hopes and fears of those whose breath is the breath of the world's applause. He was not pursued by the haunting terrors of the hangers-on of public favour ; he was not pressed by the up-hill race of men who pant their hearts out in the struggle of gold ; he was not driven to find no sweetness in sleep, no beauty in summer hours, no charm in women's smile, because greed hunted him on and on, through dark and devious ways, seeking the rivers of gold. He sought neither riches nor

renown; he greeted each dawn without regret for its yesterday; he saw the sun set and the night descend with happy Jean Paul humour, saying in those words of wisdom, 'I am content since I have lived to-day!'

And he loved the people, and was loved by them; making his home wheresoever men enjoyed and suffered.

Many wondered whence he came; many wove a thousand marvellous histories to account for the anomalies which even the least intelligent could mark in him: none knew anything for truth concerning his origin, his nation, or his history. Old people in this vine-country remembered him a bright boy of twenty years, with the bronze of southern suns on his fair skin, and the fire of a passionate youth in his blue eyes; who had come no one knew whence, who laughed, and loved, and played, and worked amongst them; and left them often for long absences, and returned to them always the same, however many years had passed, however slight the stay he made. He was 'Tricotrin'; all was said in that; he came and went whenever it pleasured him, never questioned, ever welcomed, like the swallows of the spring.

He was not wholly of them, that even the peasantry felt; but he was with them heart and soul, and they loved him better for that nameless difference, that intangible unlikeness, which made

them, whilst he toiled amongst them and feasted amongst them, yet perceive a royalty in him that he never lost; even as the shepherd-kings of the old East were none less kingly to their people because they lived on pulse and water, because they sheared the fleece and folded the herds, and dwelt under the tents of their wandering people.

The people loved him in all lands; especially they loved him in this beautiful France, which he had made his mistress by preference out of all the fair sisters of Europe. The people caressed him, obeyed him, adored him, with a loyalty that would have rendered him an irresistible power in times of revolution; and as he rowed down the river he knew well that there was not a cottage on its banks, not a water-mill on its shores, not a cabaret in its villages, under whose roof he would not have been welcome as is the summer sun in mowing time, when its early smile gives promise of an after-math.

But he did not care to go ashore in that hot and lustrous summer night. Three miles down the river he overtook the hay-barge, slowly floating in the moonlight with its load of fresh-cut grasses, odorous as violets. It drifted through the broad, sheeted, silver radiance lazily, charmingly, with its great sail black against the sky, and the fragrant dews on its huge soft mounds of fodder that were tossed loosely together, with the wild clover and the

white marguérites, scarcely dead, that had been mown with them. He hailed it, knowing its owner well, and the men recognized him with a shout of delight. The barge was stopped; in a second more he had leapt up amongst them, received with vociferous affection; they were to sail all night down the stream, and they took his little boat in tow with eager pleasure.

The skipper was a lithe handsome black-browed Marseillais, with his broad chest bare, and a red sash knotted round his loins, and great gold earrings in his ears, who had taken the peaceful Loire traffic for love of a Loiret woman.

The skipper had earned a perilous repute for lawless piratical voyages in the southern waters, and was said to be as hot and as swift and as fierce as his own storm winds; hence the people of the woman he loved denied her to him with bitter words and loud revilings. Margot clung to her fiery southern lover, and refused to be comforted: there was misery for the child, and feud between her suitor and her brethren. At last, in one evil day, the latter heaped insult on insult till the Marseillais' blood of flame leaped up like a sword from its scabbard; his knife flashed in the sun, and would have darted down, first to be sheathed in her brother's breast and then in his own, had not an outstretched hand turned the blow, at price of a wound in its own palm, and Tricotrin's voice called out,

'Has France no foes that her sons fight together?'

The offenders were passionately contrite, they wept like children to see his blood, they implored his pardon, they cursed themselves: he laughed and drew little Margot to him with his unwounded arm.

'Little one! Are you still not afraid of that sea-lion? No? You think he is so sure not to wound *you?* Well, then—if they are sorry for my hurt, your brethren must give you to me to give to him. You are the only lion-tamer for this wild beast of ours!'

And they gave her: so he made peace amongst them, and won for evermore the fierce, ardent, grateful soul of the Marseillais.

Margot's lion never harmed her; as her lion to Una, was Eudes Caros to the pretty, brown, soft, tender child of the Loire. He gave up the wild night roaming on the shores of the Riviera, for peaceful river-trading between the banks of her native stream; and now, in the little cabin of the hay barge, where the solitary oil lamp hung above her lovely bent head, Margot sat, with a dreaming happy smile in her drooped dark eyes and on her thoughtful mouth, as she gazed at a picture of Christ hung under the lamp, and looked from that downward on the child that lay asleep at her breast.

'Did Mary know he would be God and yet die

on the cross? Ah how she must have longed that he had been but a mortal child who could have grown to manhood, and lived on obscure but unharmed!' thought little Margot, pressing closer the flushed cheek of her firstborn; the thought was wholly a woman's!

Better an ignoble safety, an inglorious impunity, for the man that they mould, than the divinity of martyrdom, than the crucifixion of genius! Better that the soul, which is not of them, should die out in apathy than that the body they conceive and nourish should perish!

So they say—Margot and her million of sisters upon earth: and, of the sons they bear, none go up to Calvary, but thousands cumber the world as swine. Yet these women are good; their kisses are tender, their hands are pure: it is but their souls that are dead; it is but the souls of their children they kill.

Whether Margot's son were destined to become poet or swineherd, leader or servitor amongst men, he slept happily in her arms now, and she dreamt happily over him, while the barge floated in moonlight down the stream, and Tricotrin, nonchalantly cast upon the great sweet piles of hay, talked with the Marseillais, watched the shadowy landscapes drifting by, or touched now and then the Straduarius to fitful cadences full of river-song.

The night was very warm and profoundly still;

one of the splendid nights of France, with stars innumerable burning through a cloudless atmosphere. The slow, calm passage of the barge, with the fresh odour of its freight rising on the air, with the woods and vineyards and villages of the river-banks softened to an inconceivable beauty by the light, with the murmur of the water as it parted and met again, and with the occasional chime of belfry-bells from the land ringing some mellow monotone as they told the flight of an hour, was the fittest method for the passage of a summer night, and held a thousand poems and pictures in its indolent starlit voyage. Such pictures, such poems, as he best loved to fill his sight, and his heart, and his memory with; such as seen, and felt, and treasured, with the true instinct of pure love, had made his life itself the poem and the picture that it was.

As the evening wore on, Caros, prouder of the passenger his barge bore than he would have been of a king for his freight, went below to his Margot; Tricotrin remained stretched on the hay with all the fragrant dead flowers and saintfoin beneath him in a couch that was easier than the down of monarchs' beds. He fell asleep, sleep coming as lightly and as swiftly to him as it comes to a tired, healthy child; a night-bird's wing sometimes softly touching his forehead, a cadence from a monastery chime sometimes mingling with his dreams. When he awoke it was night still; there

was a break of dawn eastwards, but the stars were still out, the barge was still winding its tranquil way down the water.

Leaning his arms down in the yielding grasses he lay looking awhile, lazily, at the mark where the keel cut the stream, at the dews that had fallen on the grasses, at the heavy black sails swinging idly to and fro. His indolence did not endure long; a face near him caught his eyes and his pity; and with Tricotrin human sympathies were very keen and swift, human woe and joy the sure chords to arouse and to move him. The face he saw now was one of infinite pain; it was the face of a man, who, like himself, had chosen that odorous mountain of grasses and herbs for a couch; and who was lying there looking, with wide-opened eyes, down into the ebb and flow of the water against the sides of the barge.

He was a man scarce yet of middle age, with a rugged, homely, weather-worn countenance, and large, black, pathetic eyes that, out of the roughness of the other features, gazed, with a piteous, sightless, yearning look into vacancy;—a look as of one startled and astray in some great agony. He wore the usual blouse of the working-day, and his hair was unkempt, his linen soiled, his hand black with the pitch with which he had that day caulked the sides of the barge; but there was that in the mute, intense, wondering anguish of the eyes that

gave at once grandeur and exceeding pathos to his aspect. It was the look of a noble animal who has been struck a cruel blow, and who will not hurt the hand that struck it, even in just vengeance.

Tricotrin spoke to him gently, on some trifle of the night; the man started, answered wearily, then lapsed into his former attitude. New questions fared no better; he replied to them with a certain oppressive effort, but only an instant afterwards to fall afresh into the same apathy and absorption: he was but a common sailor or fisherman, with nothing above the common in him, yet the patient, terrible despair upon his face—a despair as of one incessantly seeking what was lost—lent him dignity, gave him greatness.

Tricotrin let him be; he knew how cruel is the kindness which forces itself in upon the silence and the solitude of calamity; and he saw too that here the mind was not wholly present, that in some sense reason had been dulled by suffering, though sufficient perception remained for the mechanical words and actions of daily existence. He said no more; but in the still dark dawn, the music of his violin softly supplied the place of speech. There were many times when, through its manifold voices speaking in an universal tongue, he uttered to himself and others what the words of his mouth could not have phrased. Through it all the genius in him spoke; and in it all the heart of

the player went out to the hearts of his fellow-men.

The music, unnoticed at first, failing at first to penetrate the profound self-absorption of the seaman, reached his ear gradually, as wave on wave of gracious sound broke on the air like the tide on a shore with rhythmical recurrent music. He did not note it as what it was; he did not make visible sign that he even heard it; but gradually consciousness of it stole upon him.

The music filled the quiet of the hour, that was only stirred besides by the lapping of the water as the vessel glided down; music low, and sad, and sweet; music like a psalm of consolation, with all the blind hungered yearning of a soul adrift upon a bitter world, told and answered in it. It pierced the lethargy that enshrouded a darkened, desolate mind; where the sailor leaned, with his chin resting on his hands and his eyes gazing down into the river, a certain change came over him, like the first quiver of returning life into one half dead through stupor; great tears started into his eyes, softening their vacancy; he moved with restless pain, then started from his bed of hay with a gesture of intolerable suffering.

'Hush,—hush! It reminds me of her voice!'

The music ceased even as he spoke; Tricotrin touched him.

'Of her? Of whom?'

The sailor's eyes turned on him with the tears floating in their weary depths.

'I cannot bear it! It is like her—like her voice as she sung her ballads!' he muttered, regardless of the question, lost only in the one memory that filled the darkened chambers of his mind to the exclusion of all outward sight. 'I have lost her, you know, she went from me so long ago. One morning she laughed in my eyes, and kissed my mouth, and threw her white arms around my neck in play, with the sun all so bright on her face; and at night—at night, you remember?—there were only ashes on the hearth, silence in the chamber, darkness everywhere. Darkness that no light ever breaks; no light ever will break,—till I find her!'

He was ignorant that he spoke to one who had never ere then looked upon his face; he had no remembrance that the words he uttered had no meaning to the ear that heard them; to him his grief filled the world, his loss laid the earth desolate.

Tricotrin rested his hand gently on the other's shoulder; he saw that his music had broken the stupor of the brain, and stirred, though but to troubled shapeless motion, the locked thoughts of its solitary musing; he waited with patience to do more.

'To find her?' he repeated. 'Then this one whom you love is not dead?'

'Dead? No—she is not dead,' the seaman an-

swered slowly, while his great eyes searched his companion's with a heart-rending look of search and of bewilderment. 'That is it—see you!—she is not dead. Dead women lie cold and motionless, their fair limbs do not stir, nor their eyes unclose, nor their lips breathe, but they *are* there—you can hold them though their heart does not beat on yours; you can caress them though your kiss strikes on ice; you can wind their hair round your hands though they know your touch no longer. They *are* there, though they lie lifeless on their bridal-beds. But she was gone, and did not leave even the beauty of her body to me. The chamber was dark, still, desolate; there was not even a dead woman to gather the sunbeams about her, and to seem to smile with their light on her mouth!'

There was an unutterable tenderness and desolation in the answer; his hearer knew all the meaning of those wandering pathetic words;—there is a loss worse than the loss that death causes. He divined what that loss had been; but he saw that the blow it had dealt had numbed the brain of the man who suffered by it out of all comprehension of its truth.

'She is not dead?' he said softly. 'Then hope is still with you?'

The puzzled aching eyes answered him with a look that struck him to the soul.

'Hope—hope? Yes,—I hope. I suppose I hope, since I live on;—but the years are many, and

I grow weary. It was in my youth that I lost her; and now I grow old. Ever and again I think I behold her;—some girl's laugh on a grape-waggon, some girl's eyes that smile at me through the lattice that opens at dawn, some girl's round limbs where they bathe and float in the summer sea, have something of her, and make me think I have found her. But it is never so;—they do not know me; they have no light in their glance when they see me; they have no place in their hearts for me. I wander far and wide; I go east and west, north and south, I seek her in the cities and forests, I watch before the palaces, I search in the hospital-wards, I look for her in the crowds of the streets, I wait for her in the loneliness of the plains—all in vain, all in vain!'

'Is it so many years since you lost her?'

'It is many. I cannot tell how many. I keep no count. The seasons come and go, but she does not come with them. Ah! it is terrible that!—in a throng to see but one face, in a world to hear but one voice, and the face for ever eluding, and the voice for ever mocking you! And the earth is so wide, you know;—one may toil on and on and on and never reach nearer! The house is ready for her just as she left it; the flowers are dead, I cannot help that,—she is so long away,—but all is as she left it. I try always to keep it so; I think it will pleasure her when she comes back.'

His head dropped on his chest with a heavy sigh,

the lethargy stirred for awhile by the power of the music returned; the brooding patience settled down again on the features which for an instant had quivered and changed. He was not conscious that he had spoken to a stranger; he had only uttered the ever-present thoughts of his mind with the wandering eloquence born of the intensity of one single and dominant feeling.

A voice called him to the farther end of the vessel: with the mechanical instinct of obedience he swung down from the piles of the hay and went whither he was bidden,—become only a common boatman, gone to the coiling of a rope, the reefing of a sail.

Tricotrin watched him as he passed aft in the dusky dawn that was now faintly reddened by the first approach of day: his heart ached for this man who with his hard life and his deadened reason could yet find strength and greatness for such love as this.

'A woman!' he thought. 'The same old story ever! And the same blow which pierces Estmere's purples strikes through the seaman's canvas shirt! There is no mail against that stroke, either in power or in poverty.'

The dark handsome head of the Marseillais looked up at him at that minute from the cabin-stair: Tricotrin signed him to come higher and leant towards him.

'Who is that boatman of yours, good Caros?'

Caros raised himself with a sailor's lightness and

swiftness on to the height of the mounds of dry grass; he was a gentle-hearted man, though the wild fire of southern pirates ran in his blood, and to the one who had given him his Loirais bride he bore a passionate devotion :

'You speak of poor Bruno, my friend?' he answered. 'He is a good sailor on rougher waters than rivers, though his brain is gone for all but his work. I knew him well down in the south; he is poor, and so I gave him a berth and a turn on my barge.'

'Bruno? Is that his name?'

'Jean Bruno :—yes. We were lads together. And we were on the same craft for years in the Mediterranean days. He was a fine fellow—a noble fellow—till she ruined him.'

'His wife?'

'Ay! His wife. We were lads together, though he looks so old, and I—I feel as young as Margot! He is scarce forty, Bruno. I remember her well; she was fifteen when she wedded him, and he a lad of twenty-two. She was the bastard child of some noble, a beautiful thing, all yellow hair, and smiling lips, and sunny eyes, and white soft limbs; she bewitched that black strong stalwart fellow, who was half lion, half lamb. He adored her —ah!—as those great, brave, mild natures always do love. It was almost terrible to see how that soft little piece of bright-coloured life held the whole

heart and soul of the man! Well,—he had one year of happiness, one year of a fool's paradise; he went short coasting voyages, no more, he could not bear to be away from the little cabin where she had everything he could get her—birds and flowers, and quaint Indian things that the Indian ships brought home. She was good enough to him; a gay, laughing, sweet-tempered, mindless thing;—who could have thought she had been so cruel? One day he bade her farewell at dawn; he was going on a fishing-trip to be absent only the day; I was waiting for him outside the cabin; I saw her laugh, and caress him, and wave her hands in adieu. We went out to sea. We were at sea all day. We got home with three boats' load by midnight. The light that always burned in her cabin was out: he flew like a madman the half league down the shore, and burst his door open,—Madelon was not there. Ah God! to this day I have never forgotten the sight of Bruno!——'

The Marseillais paused; the tide of recollection rushed with painful force in on him; when he spoke his voice was low and full of pity.

'It killed the mind in him;—shattered it out of all sense of the truth. We found the truth soon. Madelon had gone to shame; a shame that looked brilliant to her beside the innocent quiet sea-life that she led. The leaven of her mother was in her. She had gone to the stage; a famous actor had made her

his mistress. But Bruno never knew this. He could not comprehend when we tried to tell it him. She was lost; that was all he knew; that she had sinned against him he would not, or could not, understand. It was horrible!—he thought she had been stolen from him, he loved her so tenderly still! He has searched for her ever since. Time has not killed that love in him, though her crime has killed his reason. The little cabin down by the south is always kept ready for her return; not a thing is touched; and meanwhile he wanders all over France seeking what he can never find! You know who Madelon is?'

'No. She lives then?'

'She lives. Lives in—Coriolis.

'Coriolis! The great actress!—what?—the wife of that man?'

'Ay! How many such women own even as good a past as to have slept on the honest heart of an honest man they betrayed?' said the Marseillais bitterly. 'Their nests are mostly fouler than that sea-bird's nest. Yes, Madelon is Coriolis; but he does not know it, mind you. Though he seeks her, still his search is chiefly southward; he has never come on the dazzling sinner of Paris. Pray God that he never may! It is fearful enough, his quest of her, his task that can never be ended, his hope that can never be granted; but it is better, at its worst, than

the truth could be to him if he ever looked again on the face of his wife!'

He said no more, but turned quickly, and busied himself with some ropes of the barge. He loved little Margot; he could feel now for his comrade as he had not felt in the years of their youth.

Tricotrin asked no more. He knew the comedian well, a lovely, heedless, heartless woman; full of laughter, of coquetry, of caprice; a soulless, brainless, seductive thing; young still, fair still; with the beauty of the japonica or the azalea—beauty of hue and form, without a trace of the beauty that fragrance lends the flower and feeling lends the woman. Many a time had he seen the theatre she graced convulsed with mirth at her gay and mischievous follies.

The story had a great pathos for him:—he who had seen the sparkling gaiety of the wife felt the full force of the martyrdom of the husband. The cruelty and the crime had been rewarded by so shadowless a life of triumph,—the devotion and the fealty had been recompensed by so weary and endless an agony!

'Ah, waif of mine!' he thought, 'will you ever, I wonder, destroy a brave heart like that for the sake of your senses and your vanity?'

With sunrise the barge passed the village for which he was bound. He was pledged to the bridal feast of Yvon Mascarras, or his heart would have inclined to follow the fortunes of that patient desolated

life which had been ruined by a woman's infidelity. He went up to Bruno, and bade him gently farewell. The seaman lifted his head from the rough work on which his hands were engaged, and replied with mechanical courtesy; the momentary light and reason that the music had wakened there had died out from his features: the old, darkened, brooding, lifeless pain had gathered there again.

'There is nothing one can do for him?' he asked of Caros.

The Marseillais shook his head.

'Neither God nor man can aid him. Who can give him back his wife, in her youth and without her crime?'

It was true. Solace for Bruno could only come with death.

Tricotrin watched him one moment more, sitting under the black shadow of the sail, with his fingers working at the cordage, and his eyes looking out at the sun, where it rose in all its glory.

Then, with the hands of Caros grasping his own in grateful farewell, and the bright face of little Margot looking, smiling and sunny, over the side of the barge, he dropped himself into his own little boat, and rowed himself straight across the stream to the landing-place. As he moored it to land, he paused a moment looking after the barge where it drifted slowly on down the river, with the glow of the sunrise, amber-hued and ruddy, on the waters around it.

'To have life killed in one at twenty-three by a woman!—and men call diseases that slay outright "cruel," while there are these blows which murder by means that draw out the torture through a quarter of a century. The plague is merciful compared with a woman without pity!' he thought as he watched the form of Bruno, dark and motionless under the shadow of the sail.

That thing he himself had saved yonder, who was chasing the butterflies so joyously, with the sunshine on her fair brow, careless of the pain they felt—she, too, would soon be a woman. Had he rescued her from death only for her to deal death, like this fond, faithless wanton that the sailor had cherished? The thought came to him—well as he loved the child, well as all his years through he had loved her sex.

In some sense the weary, lonely, melancholy figure of the boatman, with his strong, massive frame that would not perish, and his jarred aching brain, to which death would have been so much mercy, stood out to him in painful contrast with his memory of the light, gracious, golden presence of the child, as he had left her amongst the scarlet flowers and the dewy leaves. These were both forms of the same human life!

But the thought was a bitter cucumber which Tricotrin threw away in obedience to his favourite Antoninus' counsel. He left the barge to pass on her way, and after bathing in the river walked through

summer woods and green vineyards to the village of his destination, where already in the early day the peasantry were stirring, and the young girls and the children going out to gather wild lilies, and honeysuckles, and great branches of roses, to crown the head and strew the path of the prettiest amongst them, who was to wed with Yvon Mascarras.

And there, under the low eaves of the vine-dresser's cottage, or under the blossoming boughs of the limes that sheltered the house, Tricotrin, with his mirth and his music, kept these innocent revellers gay from daybreak to nightfall,—gay with a zest they never had unless he were the Lord of Misrule. And the Loirois maidens, with their black laughing eyes, and their lithe robust forms, and their feet that flew like the flash of phosphoric insects, danced all through the sultry summer night to the same melodies, touched by the same hand which had awakened to momentary consciousness of its own misery the numbed and stricken heart of the boatman Bruno.

CHAPTER VIII.

UNDER the old sign of the *Cornemeuse* there was a gay, after-midnight supper.

It was not the *Cornemeuse* of Dancourt, of Marivaux, of Piron. It was not the famous, well-beloved café of the poets, the artists, the epigrammatists of the eighteenth century; but it was a *Cornemeuse* as mirthful if not as traditional as theirs.

A bright, white-painted, gas-glittering little house, with gilded balconies and tricoloured flags, and tiny chambers, and open glass doors, with the perpetual colour and movement of the Paris crowd under the trees before it, and the vivacious noise and music of a Paris night all around it. It was a resort of the bohemians,—of the painters, and the actors, and the rhymesters,—of those who make the laughter of the world, and of those who limn its manners for the age to come. Chiefly the artists came thither, and within the little building there was scarcely a single white

panel, or a single piece of plaster, that was not covered with the charcoal or the chalk, the oil-colour or the pen-and-ink, of the master hands of France. The *Cornemeuse* had untold gold upon its walls; and the owner of it, a bright, hot-blooded man of the south, loved the pictured walls with all his soul, and had never sold a touch from his guests' brushes save once, when his daughter's dowry could not be found in any other wise, when he had taken down a shutter whose three panels were rich with three great masters' idle fancies, and had parted with it for its weight in francs. For half a century the *Cornemeuse* had thus gathered its wealth upon its walls and timbers; and amongst its treasures—the treasures its host valued most, though they were but the gifts of an amateur, were some half-dozen female heads, with all the grace of Greuze and all the velvet hues of Boucher;—heads that looked out in charming coquetry from quaint dark corners, and laughed down from window-nooks, wreathed with flowers,—heads under which the brush of their creator had scrawled carelessly, 'Tricotrin.'

'You could have beaten us all if you would,' had said once to their artist a painter whose name stood as the Velasquez of his modern time.

'Possibly; but then Art would have been my tyrant, whereas she is now my handmaiden.'

'And serves you well. Yet, if you had let her rule you entirely—'

'I should have been her slave. He is a fool who is subject to his mistress. Can he ever wholly enjoy her? I doubt it.'

'But is it not waste of genius?'

The wanderer shrugged his shoulders.

'I do not say whether it is my weakness or my strength to hate the bondage of anything,—even of Art. I only say—it is my temper!'

'But if every man had such a temper?'

'Well, if every bird were a lark we should get no useful fowls for the stew; but I do not see that the utility of stews to eat proves any argument against the right of the larks to sing?'

And the man who loved song, and light, and green meadow lands, and blue sunny skies, like the larks themselves, had taken up his friend's palette and sheaf of brushes, and had dashed in, in two hours, a female head that had all the brown glow, the voluptuous lustre of the south in it,—a head that Titian might have painted.

He would create such in the caprice of free impulse; but he would have produced them as a trade no more than his fellow-bohemians, the larks, will sing in cellars.

It might be strength. It might be weakness. But it was, as he said, his temper.

Beneath that same golden, ardent, beaming Hebe face that he had there sketched in oils on the panel, he sat amongst his brethren now at the supper of the

Cornemeuse, with the light on the leonine beauty of his head, and in the sparkling laughter of his eyes. He was the king of the revelry; revelry of wit and wine, where those whom nature had anointed with the same chrism that touched Rubens's brow and Shakspeare's lips, held joyous, lawless sovereignty; leaning to kiss ripe scarlet mouths of women because they were men, but rising to great thoughts that left far beneath them alike women and the world, because they were also immortals.

His laugh rang out, tuneful as the music of silver; his wit flashed through the speech like meteors through the night; his improvisations, full of irony, of raillery, of caricature, made the gay shouts of his listeners echo again and again. Ben Jonson odes, Beaumarchais rhymes, Béranger songs, and Breton carols, coursed each other off his lips, in a wild tournament of tongues; his own swift satires unhorsed all combatants, and as he drank he chanted Hellenic bacchanal hymns, with all the bright gay grace of Greece.

He would have lived as soon without light as without the freedom of unfettered mirth, the abandonment of unchained gaiety, the debonnair enjoyment of the lord of misrule.

He loved pleasure; but he loathed debauch; when the former glided in its riot to the latter he left the *Cornemeuse,* as the morning dawn began to break, and went out into the air; the wine having

only warmed all his poet's fancies, and only making richer and fuller still in its melody the ring of his voice as he walked through Paris, singing aloud the

> God Lyæus ever young,
> Ever honoured, ever sung,

of the wine-mellowed Elizabethan verse.

Tricotrin knew how to enjoy. His censors—and he had many—said that he deemed this too exclusively the only aim of life. At the least his enjoyment was of that free, liberal, and gracious fashion which sheds it light on all around it, and is never cramped into egotism, nor distorted into orgy.

None the less either because he came freshly from the lavishness of mirth and the pleasures of the senses was he awake to all that is terrible, to all that is horrible in the shame, the crime, the hunger, the torture that were hidden beneath the marvellous night-glitter of the city through which he went.

None the less because on his lips the carol was so mirthful of the

> 'Stained with blood of lusty grapes,
> In a thousand lusty shapes,
> Dance upon the mazer's brim,
> In the crimson liquor swim.
> From the plenteous hand divine,
> Let a river run with wine,
> God of youth!'

did he pause in pity at the sight of a wretched

creature who begged his alms, though that pity was not heard in his first words.

'Charity?' quoth Tricotrin, to the appeal. 'You ask for what men want, every one of them, but love little to give. Pass on, my friend.'

'But bread—a morsel of bread at least?' moaned the man, who had stopped him in an obscure street, where there were few other passengers in the lateness of the night.

Tricotrin looked him through with his brilliant eyes by the light of the summer moon: he had no love for those who begged, and he knew thief from pauper at a glance.

'Off with you!' he said, amusedly. 'If a man cannot get a bit of baked wheat for himself, in a world where there is so much to be done, he is not a fellow worth keeping in the world at all, to my fancy.'

'It is hard to work!' muttered the other, who had the pure accent of education.

'Oh-hè! If everybody worked in moderation, nobody need overwork himself. It is because there are so many do-nothings—chiefly so many female drones—that those who do at all do over-much. To say nothing, that the overseer of Greed drives his slaves at the devil's pace.'

'But I am starving,' moaned the beggar afresh. 'And it is so bitter to die!'

'Not at all. Mere ignorant error. Hard to die?

Is opium-sleep hard after racking pain? What fools men are! Writhing in famine and disease, they think it hard to be released from both!'

'Ah you have not felt hunger!'—the poor wretch was longing for mere food; to be epigrammatized by a stranger in the desolation of the streets, little appeased the terrible desire.

Tricotrin's eyes softened greatly.

'Have I not?' he said, with infinite gentleness. 'You mistake, my friend.'

'Then for heaven's sake give me bread!' said the man fiercely; for his growing need made him ferocious, like a desert beast.

'Tut! Say for humanity's sake. Well—I have not a sou on me. I have spent them all at the *Cornemeuse* yonder.'

Cheated in his hope, the starving creature shrank back with a shrill yell of grief, like a struck dog's; the sound went to the heart of his hearer, and outbalanced the predisposition against him, which his voice and his features had aroused.

He struck the beggar kindly on the shoulder.

'Unphilosophic man! Blind yet to the advantages of death? Come then—follow me.'

With his quick light step, and resuming his chant of Lyæus, Tricotrin led the way, through many tortuous turnings, till he reached the quarter of St Martin, the starving wretch following him in dumb quiescence, shivering, though the night

was warm with all the balmy sweetness of a late French summer.

An impulse of trust had made him accost this stranger, so utterly unlike himself, who had so dauntless a carriage, and who had on his lips the carol of such careless revelry. All that evening and night through he had vainly sought pity from the crowds of Paris, from the painted women, the men of wealth, the creatures of delight, who swarmed there in such busy, heedless, glittering throngs: only this one man had given him what he sought.

Tricotrin let himself in with a pass-key, into a house of the poor and crowded quarter, where he had fixed his dwelling for the time. He was never stationary, scarcely for so much as a week; he was yet freer and more completely unencumbered than the Arabs, for he had not even a tent to bear with him, but made his nest where he would, as fancy took him, like a yellow-hammer in a highway.

He wanted no home as he wanted no nation. Wherever men dwelt he found both.

He went up a high, wooden, ricketty staircase, very high, for he always chose his room nearest the sky, and bade the beggar follow him into the topmost chamber.

It was a very large attic, for he could endure no cramped space; with bare floor and bare walls; Mistigri curled up on a little straw bed, and his Attavante and his Straduarius lying together on the

deal table. It was perfectly comfortless; but he was never in it except for slumber, and through the open window there shone the sky, star-studded.

He wasted no time in words, but striking a light and going to a cupboard in the wall, drew out a great roll of bread, some cold meat, an apparatus for coffee-making, and a flask of Burgundy, all he had in his possession. He set the food before the beggar; made some steaming coffee in five minutes; and poured him out as much wine as it was safe to give him after his long fast. The man devoured as only starvation can, and Tricotrin, turning his back on him to spare him a witness of his voracity, busied himself talking to Mistigri, where she had thrown herself down on the mattress.

Now and then he cast a look at his guest, and the survey did not please him. There was a wolfish keenness in the way he ate which was of itself repulsive; but it was less this, than the cast and expression of his features that displeased his host. He was very delicately made, and his face was of beautiful type, with the hair cut short over the brow, and falling longer behind; he was not young, but the face remained youthful, though its clear olive skin was livid, and the jet black curls had many threads of white. Handsome he was, handsome as an Antinous, but the beauty was crafty, feline, cowardly, full of latent lust and cruelty, though such as would

have been dangerously comely to the eyes of sensual women.

Something of remembrance came to Tricotrin as he watched him: but what the memory was he could not recall.

His meal over, the man thanked him with all the profusion of southern expletive, and all the grace of southern manner; there was that both in his speech and air which showed he had once been gently nurtured, though now fallen as low as this.

Tricotrin seated himself on the straw pallet, and listened silently; he was pondering what he could do for him; it was not his way to give men mere passing aid.

'No thanks,' he said at last. 'Sit down again a minute. I have done nothing for you. In Utopia there will be no want. But whilst we are as far from Utopia as we are now, we are bound to help one another. Tell me, my friend—what have you been?

'Nothing!'

'Nothing! The best thing if you are a philosopher, the worst if you are not.'

'But "Philosophy bakes no bread," as Novalis has it,' murmured the stranger, with a mirthless and bitter smile.

Tricotrin eyed him more closely.

'Well—I am not altogether sure of that. At the least she teaches us to be content, in default of

bread, with a handful of pulse. That is better than to have discontent and dyspepsia after a banquet. But, you are a man of education. Did your sense never tell you that it does not do to be "nothing," unless one has a million to be it upon?'

'I suppose it should have told me so, but I thought each day that the morrow—'

'Cras vivas—hodie jam vivere, Postume, serum est.
Ille sapit; quisquis, Postume, vixit heri,'

murmured Tricotrin; he who enjoyed existence with the versatility of an humourist, the richness of an artist, and the carelessness of a wanderer, felt as much contempt as pity for those who were ignorant of the true secret of happiness—living in the present.

'Martial might have remembered,' said the sufferer, quickly, 'that there are some people who never get a chance of "living," worth anything at all, either yesterday, to-day, or tomorrow.'

'Humph! The wise man compels chance. However, some want a good opportunity, as bad swimmers want an air-belt. We will see if we cannot furnish you with one. But first be more explicit with me. What has been your career?'

The stranger hesitated.

'A chequered one,' he said, bitterly. 'Now in sunshine, now in darkness. I have known what it is to be rich, successful, triumphant; I have known pleasure, and abundance, and women's loves. But —in a word—I have been a gamester; and the good

fortune that crowned me so long has forsaken me for the last score of years, till—till—I have become what you see me!'

The tears stood in his eyes; he pitied himself with exceeding pity, and regarded his fate, as every gambler does, as the cruel result of a combination of cruel conspiracies.

'A gambler!' echoed Tricotrin. 'How could you say you were nothing? You are of the trade that ruins more souls than any other, except the trade that women drive in love. A gambler! Bah! to peril all your brain, and your peace, and your future on the caprice of the turn of a wheel! Why to pin them on the faith of a woman is not more foolish, and is far more poetic!'

'You are pleased to jest at my misery!' muttered the other, sullenly.

'Nay. I jest at no misery,' said Tricotrin,' earnestly. 'God forbid! But if you have no other resource than play, it is difficult indeed to see how to aid you. Could I give you thousands, they would all go in one night of hazard!'

'I used to have such luck! How could I tell that those devils of cards would only mock me as age came on me?'

The question was piteous and passionate, he deemed himself wronged as by some base treachery, by the change of the chance that had used to smile on him.

Tricotrin looked at him in silence: his compassion for the evident wretchedness and dire want of the man restrained the scornful satire that rose to his lips on this folly of first trusting, and then recriminating, hazard.

'In what fashion would you most like me to aid you?' he asked at length. 'I am poor myself; yet I could put you in many ways of earning bread, if you were one of those who were willing to labour for it.'

'You recommend labour—but you follow pleasure, I believe. That is a common anomaly!'

The ingratitude of the graceless retort to the one who had just succoured him in starvation, grated on Tricotrin's ear; but he did not suffer it to influence him. This man was in necessity; in Tricotrin's Catholic humanity that fact excused all bitterness in him.

'You judge of what you know nothing,' he said, simply. 'Pleasure is but labour to those who do not know also that labour in its turn is pleasure. But we have to do with your concerns, not with mine. Can you tell me more of your life,—though you have epitomized it in that one word, Play?'

'What use would it be?' moaned the other, wearily. 'I have said, I had my enjoyments, my conquests, my indulgences, years ago—years ago! Of late—for many a long day—I have done nothing save hang over the gaming-tables, on which I had often not even a coin to

stake! I have been a fool—oh, yes! I know it as well as you can tell it me. And why? Because I had never the courage to be wicked *enough!* It is the man who is timorous in crime, who alone fails to make crime a fair mistress, and a good paymaster!'

As he uttered the one-sided warped truth, his delicate face worked and darkened with a spirit of evil which looked as though only the power, but never the will, had been lacking in him to give himself wholly over to sin.

Tricotrin saw that, but he passed over the speech without reply to it.

'What is your country?' he asked, simply.

'By birth I am Greek.'

A darkness passed over his hearer's face.

'Slang has made Greek synonym for Cheat! Popular instincts rarely err. And you are "noble" by birth too, I suppose?'

The stranger winced under the ironic and contemptuous intonation of the sentence. He made no answer; feeling his host's lustrous eyes were fixed like an eagle's on him.

'Every Hellenic scoundrel is descended from the Pisistratidæ, or the Alcmæonidæ, if we believe his statement on the matter!' said Tricotrin, with the same disdainful accent in his phrase. 'What may your name be?'

'Paulus Canaris.'

'*What!*'

As the word leapt from his throat he leapt himself on to the Greek, with his hand on the weakly and subtle form, that writhed impotently in his grasp.

'Thief—traitor—hound!' he cried, with the intensity of passion reiterating through the words, while to and fro in his irresistible grasp he swung the stranger as easily as though he held a dog. Speechless, breathless, paralyzed, the man strove in vain to get free from this fiery and instant wrath, which had thus broken up from the genial and sunny mirth of the one who had fed him and succoured him.

'What have I done?' he gasped. 'Is this your hospitality?'

Struck by the last word as by a lash, Tricotrin loosed and shook him from him.

'You have broken my bread—you are sacred. But for that—by God!'—

The oath was stifled in his throat; breathing fast and loud, controlling with strong effort the passion which possessed him, he fell back from the gamester, with his back against the casement, seeking the air by instinct, as a hound after combat seeks water.

'What is my crime?' murmured the other halting, panting, blanched with fear. 'What do you know of me?'

'I know you—as the paramour of Estmere's wife!'

The Greek's features grew livid, and all his delicate limbs trembled as with palsy.

'Estmere! Who are *you* then?'

'No matter that! I know all your life; adulterer, liar, betrayer, thief!'

The furious words coursed swiftly on each other; leaning back against the attic window, with his arms crossed on his chest as though to withhold himself from violence against the man made sacred by having eaten of his salt, Tricotrin stood gazing on him, with his eyes aflame like a lion's, and the night wind blowing his hair.

The Greek cowered under that look as under some physical torture; he had no conception of who the man was who thus arraigned him, he had no conception of why his wrath was thus aroused against the paramour of the wife of another, but he knew that the vileness of his own life had been seen by these eyes that pierced him with their accusation and their scorn.

'You use bitter words,' he muttered at length, in the ague of fear. 'Who are you—in God's name, who are you?'

'Blaspheme God, you who betrayed man!' cried Tricotrin, his passion once more striving for mastery. 'No matter who I am—suffice it I am one who knows *you*. If you had not eaten of my bread I would choke your crimes down your throat with the vengeance on you that you merit. You are safe with

me, being under my roof, having sat at my board. But for that—'

He ceased; his breath came loud and hard, it went sore with him to let this man pass out in peace. But he would not break the bond that made the guest sacred to him, by the old grand law of nomad tribes; and he would not forswear his word. With a swift movement he turned, swept out the few gold coins his cupboard held, and threw them down at his debtor's feet, with a gesture of speechless scorn.

'I keep my promise even with things as vile as you. There is your "chance." Take it, and begone!'

The Greek cowered and shrank with shame, with terror, with repugnance. He hesitated an instant, the dire fear upon him conflicting with the lustful impulse for the gold, that moved him to take it even at this cost. For an instant even the debased nature of the man recoiled from accepting succour given thus. Then,—so low had he fallen,—he stooped, with a hurried furtive action, caught the coins in the hollow of his hand, and slunk out in his ravening greed.

He was ashamed; but avarice conquered shame.

He went stealthily down the staircase, up which his preserver had so lately brought him, and out through the narrow door. The owner of the house was just up, in the dawn, and washing down his

passages with broom and water, singing cheerily a rhythm of his old birth-country, Berri.

'Who lives in your fifth story?' the Greek whispered to him.

The gay, good-humoured Berrois smiled.

'Ah, ha! The attic has a prince indeed! Do you not know him? Why, all Paris knows Tricotrin.'

'Tricotrin!' murmured Paulus Canaris, as he slunk onward into the early daylight; the name told him nothing; he had never heard it. It increased his perplexity and his terror. He hastened to forget both in trying his 'chance' at the nearest gambling-den; but he registered the name in his memory.

When he was left alone, Tricotrin stood at the open window, his passion quivering still, hot and bitter, through his blood. It was rarely that rage or grief ever mastered the mellow, happy, and abundant life within him; but when he gave way to either the emotion was terrible, the hour of his abandonment to it was very dark.

Forte è l' aceto di vin' dolce.

For a long time he stood there combating the hatred and the remembrance that were so heavy on him. Then he shook himself, as lions shake their manes. The dew was wet on his forehead; his face was flushed red with the fury he had restrained; his chest heaved with quickened breaths. He stretched his hand out, and dashed to shivers the glass from which the Greek had drunk. As the

pieces fell he smiled sadly, in rebuke of his own uncontrolled and boyish action.

'Mistigri,' he murmured, 'a philosopher should be as unmoved seeing his foes as his friends. A philosopher, decidedly, should not keep such a puerility as a Past. I am disgusted with myself, Mistigri. Scold, scold, if you like; that is a favourite way with your sex of showing sympathy: and I deserve it. Bah, Mistigri! even a philosopher is mortal when his personality is touched. I should have been vile enough not to have given that man food if I had known whom it was that I fed. How contemptible that! A clear human duty broken for a private sentiment!'

Mistigri made a murmuring, affectionate noise, as though deprecatory of his self-condemnation, and comprehensive that Man was still too near his progenitor Monkey not to instinctively give blow for blow.

'Clearly contemptible, Mistigri!' continued her owner with a smile, for his moods passed as rapidly as April days from storm to sunshine. 'Lacedemonian Charellus was perfectly right. "By the gods, if I were not in wrath with you I would have you slain." He knew how wrath obscures reason. Wise man! And we degenerate moderns allege our anger as the very motive to strike! Let us banish the dark spirit, Mistigri. It is the ruin of all peace, and the foe of all philosophy!'

And to banish it, Tricotrin took up his perpetual consolers,—his violin and his meerschaum, and smoking the one drew music from the other. Whenever his joyous serenity was broken he restored its peace by the same spell as gave back sanity to Philip of Spain and Saul of Israel.

When does the artist ever so wholly escape from the oppression of the world around him as when he enters the world of his own creation?

The music stole out from the open casement into the warm grey dawn; and as it floated downward and upward on the quiet air, it breathed its beauty out over the crowded roofs of Paris.

Homeless outcasts, wandering footsore, heard it, and turned backward from where their steps were leading them to the brink of the black river. Lost women, desperate because they could not glean the foul wages of sin, caught the sweet fugitive echoes, and thought with a pang of long-dead days, when they had leaned, in innocence and infancy, against their mothers' knees. And one little child in the street below, thrust out to steal with brutal blows, and fearful of returning because his hands were empty, listened where he lay, upon a doorstep, naked, hungry, sobbing,—listened till he fell asleep, with a smile upon his pale bruised lips, and dreamed of flowers and of sunlight, and of the pitying faces of angels.

Thus Tricotrin soothed other souls beside his own.

CHAPTER IX.

'GRAND'MERE!' cried Viva; 'there is Sarazin! and he is going up to Villiers; and he says he will take us both there, if you will come; and we shall see all its glories; and he has a niece in the dairies, with whom we can stay and sup; and he will bring us back in the evening-time. Say yes! oh, do say yes!'

It was very early morning. Grand'mère was boiling the breakfast coffee, and let the pot fall over on to the burning wood as she started and turned at the Waif's breathless and passionate exordium.

'Sarazin! Sarazin is a good creature, and it would be a pleasure for thee,' she said, hesitatingly; 'but then—Tricotrin?'

'Tricotrin!' cried Viva, with eager impatience. 'Tricotrin says there is no better soul than Sarazin; and he always likes me to have pleasure,—you know

that, grand'mère! And the sail there and back! and the sight of the chateau! Oh, come, come, come!'

'Call Sarazin in to breakfast, and I will talk with him,' answered grand'mère, evasively, but knowing well in her heart that the child always got her own way.

Sarazin entered willingly. He was a little wizen, sunburnt, hardy creature, with a shell as tough as a cocoa-nut, and a temper as sweet as its milk. He was the only ferryman near for leagues, and was devoted to the service of Viva, who was as capricious and exacting as most fair mistresses are, and who owed the sunniest hours of her sunny life to him and his clumsy old boats.

One of the peasant-proprietors had hired him to take up a load of wheat that had been purchased by the stewards of Villiers. He was to leave his grandson in charge of the ferry, and himself conduct the corn-barge to the great château: nothing loth, for it was rarely that he had a chance of quitting his lonely boat-house; and to go up to Villiers was a great event in the lives of the scattered river-people of the neighbouring hamlets.

Grand'mère, troubled with an indistinct remembrance that Tricotrin had once expressed a wish that Viva should never be taken thither, but unable to recall it plainly enough to be satisfied in opposing the child's entreaty, yielded with a certain disqui-

etude, and locked up her dwelling, and went down the towing-path with a worried conviction that if she were not doing rightly, he would hear of her action from the swallows that lived by the hundreds under her eaves.

'Why do you always watch the birds so?' she had asked him one day.

'Because I have found out what François d'Assisse did not, that they can talk better to me than I to them. They tell and teach me many things, though the art of flying remains uncommunicated.'

And grand'mère had received his speech literally; and had never since then seen the swallows fly in and out of their nests under the ivy without a certain awed conviction that they listened, and saw, and took tidings to their fellow-wanderer.

'However, there can be no harm,' she thought now; 'the little one is with me and Sarazin.'

The big brown sailing boat, with its load of corn, was ready; the horses of the waggon that had brought the wheat stood half asleep upon the shore, hock-deep in grass and rushes; the little quaint ferry-boat peered out of a nest of vines and fruit-laden pear-trees, and tall leafy poplars. The whole was a lovely study of morning light and peaceful labour.

But Viva heeded little of that; rejoicing in it, after a vague, unconscious fashion, as a plant rejoices in sweet air, but never pausing to think of it

with any poet's deep, inborn delight. This was not in her. She was too essentially feminine; too radiantly self-engrossed. What she thought of was, that the peasants who had brought the wheat, and the boys who were in the boat, and the very ferry dog asleep in the sun, all gave her welcome because they found her fair.

Under the shadow flung by the sail, beneath the yellow pile of the corn, while the old woman sat knitting, and scarce looking up as the shores drifted by, Viva, lying full length on a plank, passed down the river,—slowly, dreamily, as before her Tricotrin had done on the hay-barge.

She loved nothing better than these long summer sails; and to her fancy, in that lustrous sunshine, the old boat became a gilded galley, the brown wheat golden treasures, the torn tarred sail a silken canopy, the gliding banks her kingdoms, and she a Cleopatra or a Catherine of Cyprus, sailing onward to land at the marble steps of matchless palaces. For she had the one enchanted power—youth, with which the linen folds seem robes of purple, the chaplet of cowslips becomes a monarch's crown, the wooden bench is as an ivory throne of empire.

'She dreams,—that child!' murmured grand'-mère to the ferry-keeper.

'The young always dream,' answered Sarazin. 'That is their kingdom of heaven.'

'Whose end is hell!'

'Nay, not so. Look you, there are holy dreams, and they end mostly in the cloister; and there are happy dreams, and they mostly fold their wings in their husbands' chimney-corners; and there are—'

'Such dreams as hers,' said grand'mère, with a motion of her head towards the child. 'And they—if they do not end in an empress's diadem, which cannot be, people all say, out of fairy stories—*they* end in misery, and sin, and shame!'

Little Sarazin looked affrighted.

'What then?' he whispered, 'you think the devil talks at that pretty rosy ear?'

Grand'mère shook her head in doubt.

'Sarazin, how that may be, I know not; but I do not think there is any cause for the devil to talk when a woman-child that is fair dreams of her own face.'

'That is true,' said Sarazin: and he went to the steering of his boat, while the old woman drooped her head over her knitting; and Viva watched the gliding shores with eyes that only saw the dim and glorious shapes of some imagined future.

They had started so early that Villiers was reached by noon, for the tide served them, and the wind also. Sarazin went about his errand; but he first asked permission for the old dame and the child to wander through the park, and gardens, and building; and, since his niece had some favour in the household, obtained it.

Through the sunny alleys, the fragrant avenues, the sweet, still, orange-shaded ways, and the beds of gorgeous blossom, the little bent figure of grand'-mère, in her white headgear and blue gown, with Viva's bright, gay, ever-moving form at her side, passed in the sultry August noon.

The voluble dairy-girl was their guide, chattering endlessly; but Viva paid no heed to her. She was absorbed in contemplation; in wonder as to the great man who dwelt here; and in fugitive fancies as to the possibilities of her own right to some such superb domain as this. 'Estmere—Estmere—Estmere!' she repeated over and over again to herself. 'Is he a king, I wonder?'

She had the haziest ideas as to ranks and habits. There were, to her own thinking, but two classes, the peasants, with whom she was assured she had no link in common; and the princes, with whom she was certain of affinity.

'Does it not make thee afraid?' whispered Sarazin's niece, in an awed whisper, as she led them through the splendours of the banqueting-hall.

Viva tossed back her sun-lit head.

'Afraid! I am in my native air—that is all!'

The dairymaid, daughter of very poor and abject charcoal-burners of the forest, looked at her, and crossed herself; it was true, then, she thought, that this Waif of Tricotrin's came of no mortal mould. What Viva said was true: although she had never

known but the simplest mode of existence, though her milk and bread had been served in a wooden bowl, and though her restless feet had danced over a bare brick floor ever since they had first danced at all, the child felt born to greatness: and things of beauty, luxury, or splendour always seemed to her to belong to some native and beloved sphere from which she had been banished. There are daughters and sons of cotters who feel thus; and it is they who give the world its magnificent actresses, its merciless adventuresses, its heaven-born statesmen, its Russian Catherines, its victorious Rienzis. As, likewise, there are daughters and sons of monarchs that wear their purples in uncouth clumsiness, and cling to swinish tastes and ways, and look like boors amidst their own court circles.

'*He* is not here? not the great lord?' she asked once with a pang of disappointment.

'Silly one!' cried the dairy girl. 'Should *we* be in these rooms if he were?'

'Why not?' said Viva in haughty wrath. 'He would let me be at the least: you should have seen how he bowed to me!'

And little by little she dropped aside and wandered away from grand'mère and Sarazin's niece: when she glanced at the great mirrors that they passed she saw how utterly unfitting to the place looked the little brown shrivelled figure of the good old woman, and the plump, coarse form of the

milkmaid, with their serge gowns, and their linen caps, and their heavy wooden shoes; and she grew impatient and ashamed of her proximity to them. She liked best to roam through the château alone, and when she met any of the household, glide by them unseen; and so she got away by herself and strayed at ease, dreaming a thousand dreams through the halls, and chambers, and corridors of Villiers.

Once, twice, thrice, she noticed portraits of its owner; and stood before them with rapt, uplifted eyes and folded hands; his face had a strong fascination for her, but the chief spell of his power lay in the fact that he was the first 'great prince' she had ever seen. For Viva, the offspring of hazard, who had no more ancestry than any blue cornflower that opened to the sun, and knew no more whence she came than any gold-spotted moth fluttering up in the starlight, was, by instinct, a passionate aristocrat; and adored what she did not possess, with all the half-envious, half-generous obstinacy of a thoroughly feminine nature.

No one interfered with her: she went where she would; and absorbed in her own thoughts, which were a curious, vague mixture of pain, pleasure, wonder, desire, irritation, and enjoyment, unanalyzed as a child's thoughts are, she never remembered that her 'grand'mère' might be uneasy at her absence, or vexed by her abandonment. Things of Viva's type very seldom do think of others.

Straying about thus by herself, she came at last into the picture-galleries; she had an instinctive love of pictures, born partly of her passion for colour, partly of her impulses towards graceful form and fair ideals.

Except the sketches of Tricotrin she had never seen any paintings save those in the nunnery-chapel: and hour after hour went by with her like enchantment in the presence of the Cuyps and Claudes, Salvators and Titians, Liberis and Van Dykes. To the eyes of a young and imaginative creature the painter is as a magician, and each picture becomes a mirror of gramary.

The works that appealed to the soul, the beatitudes and the martyrdoms of spiritual art, of divine aspiration, were dumb to her; but the works that were full of festivity, of colour, of splendour, of magnificent fancy, the works that appealed to the senses by the highest forms of sensuous beauty, filled her with a rapturous delight.

A tall, frail, white-haired old man, the custodian of the galleries, seeing her enter, watched her long himself unseen; it was so seldom that any footfall was heard in his solitude, that the presence of this vivacious, beautiful, unknown child was very welcome to him.

He approached her at last and spoke: Viva, wakened out of her trance, and ever ready with speech, answered him gladly, and told him how

she came thither, and all else that he chose to ask of her; while in turn she rained questions upon him. To these he replied cautiously: he was a devoted servant of the house, and there were things in their lord's life of which the servants never gossiped. But of the pictures he discoursed readily; and told her what she would of their histories.

Though gifted with the charming facile talents that make, under culture, bewitching and brilliant women, Viva was very ignorant; almost as ignorant in knowledge as she was intelligent in perception, owing less to the nuns' mode of teaching than to her own happy idleness, and her incurable hatred of trouble. The old custos was pleased to find a listener for his lore, and she was well amused with his stories: to the genealogies and histories of the works she lent indeed but a listless ear, to the anecdotes he told her of the portraits she gave an eager attention. Human life interested her more than any other thing: she had seen so few forms of it; it was environed to her sight with such magical mystery; and it lay in her hands like an unopened casket from which all the gifts of the gods would one day arise to her.

One portrait attracted her in especial.

It was the portrait of a boy, quite young, standing up to his knees in shallow water and flowering bulrushes, with a wounded water-bird in his hand. The singular charm of the picture lay in the union

of his sunlit and fearless radiance of boyish beauty, and the tearful, tender, wistful compassion in his eyes as he regarded the stricken bird. She was of too heedless a temper to be very pitiful herself; yet the study moved her and riveted her gaze: it was life-size, the work of a great artist, and bore surety —which some portraits do even to those who know not their subjects—of being a faithful resemblance of the original it re-created.

'Who is that boy?' she asked, softly, at length.

The old man sighed:

'One who died long ago.'

'Died!—oh he looks so full of life!'

'The brightest flowers are always the quickest to fade: how long the brown wallflower lives, but the purple convolvulus withers with its noon.'

She was used to such fanciful speech, and it heightened her interest in the portrait.

'Will you tell me of him? was he well known to you?'

'Yes: long years ago, in another land than this. Move you into the shade—there, the sun falls still on *his* face. I will tell you the tale if you wish. There is no shame in it.'

He stopped: there was one history in his lord's life that was dark with shame, a shame that every soul in his great households had felt as their own dishonour when it had touched their master's name.

'Tell me!' cried Viva, happy in her new com-

panion, eager for a new history, forgetful that the anxious heart of the old woman Virelois would be ere this palpitating in wonder and terror at her absence. 'Tell me!' she cried, with her bright eyes fastened on the fair eyes of the boy.

And the old man told her:

'It was long ago that its original lived. I was young myself in those days. My lord—not this lord, but his father—was a wild and lawless man; proud beyond all, but given over to his passions, which were stronger yet than even his pride. He was always known as the Mad Earl. The world thought his madness surely proved when in his travels he wedded a fisher girl,—from the sea-cabins away to the west, there, by the Biscay Waters. I have heard that they are very proud also—those fishing people of the sands of Olonne; that she refused to him to be aught save his wife. But you know nothing of these things—I forget. Well, he brought her home; there were none to say him nay: she was a magnificent creature, daring, beautiful, free of limb, carrying herself like a fleet forest doe. But of course there was a strange difference betwixt her and the women of his own rank. She was as a wild mare of the desert, and they as the stalled, slender, pampered Spanish jennets, and the trammels of splendour were chains on her, and the tyranny of pomp was a curb that for ever fretted and galled her.

'In her own national garb she looked an empress:

but in a patrician's robes she was,—a noble thing imprisoned, that made one ready to weep. She bore a son in the first year: and I think the only happy moments she knew grew out of the boy. For her husband, repenting his act, took a detestation to her; and he was passionate and hot and cruel, and would scourge her with many hard words of scorn. And that hatred for her spread to her son: he would scarce bear the sight of the child,—yet a nobler little lad never breathed. The child loved his mother, and felt the cruelty to her, though he was but an infant when it came to an end:—she died when he was only a few years old, worn out by futile pain and loss of liberty, like a captive leopardess.

'My lord went into distant lands, and took another wife in her stead,—this time the daughter of a Russian prince; and when in time she also brought him a son his bitterness grew greater yet against his heir, who had sprung from a race of French fishers. He would scarce ever see the boy; and never saw him without a mocking taunt or a brutal glance. But the two children grew up together with some seven years between them, and nothing could exceed the love in which they held each other. The difference of age only seemed to serve to draw them closer together. My lord and his wife were seldom with them; they lived in the great world, and the boys were left, with the care of able scholars, in the heart of the old Beaumanoir woods. Only, at such

rare times as the castle was filled with guests, it was always the younger that was displayed and caressed and adored, the elder was almost banished. But no venom came between them; there was nought of the Cain in the one, there was generous childish love in the other. Lord Chanrellon—that was the heir's title—had much of his mother in him: he was too proud to complain, and he gave back scorn for scorn with his father. One day when he was fifteen, —he was younger when that picture you see there was painted,—my lord and he came in collision. The quarrel was brought about by a noble dog that the Earl commanded to be killed, under some specious pretext, but chiefly, it was well known, because Lord Chanrellon loved the poor brute. Wild words came on that score between them: Chanrellon was mad with rage and anguish, and said fiery and furious things in his dead mother's name; and my lord cursed him aloud, and prayed that he might be struck dead rather than ever enter into his heritage. It was an awful scene:—but the whole household were for the boy, and pitied him, and honoured him only the more, for he was the beloved one of us all, and we knew that he was in the right, and mortally stung, and wounded, and incensed. Well,—the night of that day some rare jewels were missing:—they required to be re-set and had been left in a casket: great search and demand were made for them; and my lord, blind with wine and with hate, charged his eldest-born

with the theft of the diamonds. Ah!—if you had seen the lad's face in that hour! I never beheld a thing so beautiful! its unutterable scorn, its speechless amaze, its luminous truth and honour that any dolt must have read in its gaze! He never made answer to the foul foolish charge;—he only drew himself straight as an arrow, with his head proudly poised like a stag's, and looked his father hard and full in the eyes. Then without a word he passed from the chamber.

'It was near midnight then:—when the sun rose he was missing. We scoured park and forest and hamlet, we hunted through brake and plantation, we dragged water, and we loosed his own bloodhound out on the track. His young brother said that he had been wakened by Chanrellon leaning over him and kissing him on his mouth, and murmuring, "You shall have it all, my darling—be brave and noble and true;" but he had been still half asleep, and had thought it only a dream. However it had been no dream, it must have been a terrible truth. For towards eventide we raked up his cap entangled among the water-lilies on the moat, and a poacher crept forward and confessed that about the dawn he had heard a dull splash in the water and had stolen away—frightened, not daring to see what caused it. So then we knew he was dead:—and the young one grieved for him as a lamb for its mother.'

The old man paused; his voice failed him, the

time of his sorrow seemed fresh to him as that of a day just gone by, and his gaze was fixed on the fair tender face of the boy that looked down from above in the sunlight.

Viva listened; hushed and wondering.

'Why do you think that he died?' she asked at length.

'Why? why? Child! does not your own heart tell you?'

'But to leave such a splendid heritage?' she murmured.

'Well,—there are some to whom there is no heritage worth aught save their own stainless honour. Lord Chanrellon was one of them. He had the sea-lion's blood of his mother's race, and taunts had lashed that wild, brave, untameable blood into fury——'

Viva mused awhile wistfully: the history touched her, and yet she understood the impulse of the dead heir as little as young Pompeius, with his insatiate and dazzled vanity, could understand the supreme scorn and sacrifice, half contempt half generosity, of the Sullan renunciation.

'And you never knew more of his fate?' she whispered, with a certain sense of dread as the light died off from the portrait while a passing cloud swept over the sun.

'What more was there to know? We searched for his body; but we felt the search was useless,

for the moat was fed by subterranean waters whose channels ran deep, and passed out to the ocean. The child had been pierced to the quick by the scorn cast on his lost mother and the bitterness flung on himself. He had been falsely accused. To tempers like his there is no more unpardonable wound. He was ever impetuous and warm to passion, though those who knew him aright could lead him by his affections with a cord of silk. Well,—the Earl felt remorse, I know: he suffered keenly for awhile; but the boy that he loved was heir now, and this soon sufficed to console him. The lad himself —my present lord—felt far more enduring grief. For a long time he was as one who had lost all the treasure he owned. He had worshipped his elder brother: and the tragedy left its sorrow on him for so long that I think his nature never wholly recovered its elasticity; it made him grave beyond his years though he was so young when it happened.'

'Does he ever think of it now?'

'Ah! who can say? My lord is a great man, and lives in a great world. He may have utterly forgotten—I know not. For thirty years none have ever heard him allude to his dead half-brother. Men as high as he have fleeting memories. Yet—sometimes I fancy he remembers his playmate, for when he purchased this place and selected it as his favourite residence, he ordered this portrait amongst others to be brought hither. That would look as

though all remembrance had not perished?—however that also is many years ago now, and recollection withers under eminence.'

'I saw him once, not long ago,' whispered Viva, 'and I thought that he looked like a sovereign.'

'He is a great man,' said the old servant briefly: —her sympathies were chiefly with the lofty and brilliant life whose power and strength and dominion allured her fancy: his were with the young, rash, noble life snapped in twain so early, like a young pine broken by the first autumnal storm.

He looked at her half curiously, half angrily.

'You have not much heart, you fair thing!' he muttered as he moved away: Viva laughed a little to herself,—she remembered that the Count's daughter at the convent had said it was 'provincial' to feel emotion, and she accepted his remark as a compliment to her own aristocracy.

The sun was still clouded, and there was a grey shadow lying across the face of the portrait, as she gave one lingering farewell glance to it, and fluttered on to gaze in entranced delight at the velvet beauties of Boucher, the pictured pageants of Versailles, the rose-wreathed laughing goddesses of Watteau.

The old man, disappointed, went back to his nook in one of the embayed casements, and bent afresh over a manuscript catalogue of his beloved collection which had been a labour of love with him for many years; he took no more heed of her, but

when later on she passed him with a gay farewell, flying with swift feet down the long galleries, he murmured after her:

'*You* will never harm yourself for another's sake, you handsome wanton dragon-fly, though many may suffer for yours, like enough!'

Viva did not hear: she was out of the picture-galleries and pursuing her adventures through the building, with her long, fair, tumbled hair flying behind her like a comet's golden train.

'Oh how foolish he must have been to have given up this!' she thought: the boy's face haunted her, but his history failed to touch her because it seemed to her a madness so absolute and so insensate to fling away such proud inheritances for the mere sake of a stung honour and a dead mother's memory. She had been always caressed, indulged, adored; she had a charming innocent vanity that made any doubt of herself impossible, she was never wounded by any shame at her fate because she was so perfectly assured that her birth must be royal at least, if not more than mortal. The sensitive pride that had refused to accept honours begrudged; the fiery impulse that had refused to remain a burden to a race that had rejected his mother; the child-like chivalry of tenderness that had chosen rather to perish than live, barring out the brother he loved from his heritage;—to comprehend these was impossible to her: their nobility indeed she saw, but what she felt far

more clearly was their over-wrought and headlong self-ruin.

She wandered on, through the reception-rooms and conservatories, as idly and as gaily as a bird wanders through a rosary, and paused once more in breathless amaze of wondering delight in the midst of the tropical houses. She who had never beheld any flowers save the flowers of the field and the woods, had never seen aught in her dreams equal to these glorious blossoms of purple and scarlet and amber, these gigantic perfume-breathing lilies, these marvellous parasites with their net-work of colour, these palms like the columns of some Solomon's Temple.

She was in perfect solitude: there was nothing living beside herself save the canaries and lovebirds and cockatoos that made their home amidst the profuse vegetation. She sank down on the marble steps of the entrance, entranced; scarcely breathing, yet almost laughing with ecstasy. As the hues of the Bouchers and Watteaux had enchanted her eyes, so this wilderness of colour, this delirium of perfume, intoxicated her senses. She clasped her hands above her head in rapture.

'Ah!' she cried aloud to the wandering birds; 'ah, this must have been the world I belonged to! —this was the kingdom of my birth!'

To her it seemed far likelier that she had sprung from the violet chalice of some superb flower, such

as those that hung by the thousand around her, than that anything of want, of humiliation, of human care or human shame, should ever have weighed with her.

Her origin was a mystery; her existence was dependent upon charity; her only recollections were of the homely hearth of an old peasant woman: but this made no difference to Viva. She believed devoutly in the splendour of her own descent, and gazing down the maze of tropical colour, and drawing in the delicious odours of the magic flowers, it seemed to her that she only revisited the place of her birth, that she only breathed the air that she had used to breathe in her native land.

And whether this was in truth the awakening of dim infant memories and associations long lost but unforgotten, or whether it was but the fancied glories of an imagination steeped in fairy lore and legendary phantasies, she never asked herself. To her own persuasion, lying on these marble steps, under these wondrous coils of blossom, she was like the slumbering princess of the enchanted forest, who waited for her coming hero, for the advent of her empire. And dreaming thus in the hot atmosphere, in the intense perfume, in the lulling of the fountains that played near, the sultry fragrance overcame her, her head sank down upon the marble, and she fell asleep.

Lying thus, canopied by the purple-flowering

vine of the Pacific, with her flushed cheek on the white stone and her lips lightly parted, and the cambric of her boddice half open, showing the rise and fall of her snowy chest, a youth coming in through the orangeries, saw her, and started, and paused. He was a handsome boy, with brown delicate features, and dark slumbrous eyes, that lighted and smiled as they fell on her.

'A little peasant with a princess's face! Where can she come from, I wonder?' he thought, as he stooped down from the stair above her on which his steps had been arrested, and looked long and closely at her as she slept. He was moved and thrilled with her loveliness; but he did not hesitate to study it mercilessly in its unconsciousness: he only hesitated as to whether or no he should waken her.

He could learn who she was without her aid; and she might raise some alarm if she were startled.

He guessed that she came from some one of the hamlets, and had strayed in thither, and fallen asleep through the heat of the day and the hot-houses. He bent down one moment, on an impulse to awaken her by kisses; but some look on her face, even in its ignorance of slumber, repressed the impulse as it rose. He scarcely dared to adventure that mode of calling her back to the sentient world. He gazed at her long, and drew some of her curls through his hands. She was unlike any one of the peasant girls whom he had ever seen among the vine-

yards or on the river barges: he felt a difference that he could not have analyzed.

Then, moving very softly, he gathered some of the finest fruit from the grapes and oranges that hung above-head, laid them down on her blue kirtle without wakening her, and drawing off a ring from his hand, slipped it over a branch of yellow jessamine, and left it with the fruit on her lap. Then, laughing to himself, he moved away, and out of the tropical houses.

'The pretty fool will think they came from Paradise!' he mused. 'It will be the best mode to rouse her to interest: nothing allures a woman like a mystery! Who can she be? but that can soon be learned.'

Viva slept on, unconscious of her gazer and her gifts. The day was far advanced when she awoke with a start, as a loriot flying past her brushed her forehead with his wing. Her eyes were barely opened ere she saw the fruit, and flower, and jewel on her lap: she gave a loud cry, half of terror, half of delight. By her they were believed to be as surely fallen from a supernatural hand as Dorothea's roses and apples which were sent from Eden to convince the scoffer and the sceptic.

The place filled her with a sudden affright. The birds seemed elves, the flowers seemed like glistening eyes. The odours and the heat stifled her; the cadence of the fountains sounded like fairies' music.

She gathered all the presents up in her linen skirt, and fled headlong out from the winter-gardens, and under the colonnades of orangeries, and forth into the fresh air, hardly knowing what she did, but believing that she bore some fairy's treasures with her; calling aloud on Sarazin and Grand'mère, and half delirious with the wonder of her own greatness, that thus marked her out for such especial favour from this elfin world which was unseen by common eyes.

She had some recollection of the way she had come from the out-houses where Sarazin's niece had her dwelling; and she rushed on and on, across the gardens, down the terraces, over the lawns, along the avenues, all on fire with her marvellous story, panting and thirsting to gain a listener. Instinct took her right, and she dashed headlong into the wide cool chamber, with its blue and white Dutch tiles, and its sweet, wholesome scent of cows and of milk, of thyme and of clover, where the dairy-women were clustered round the old Virelois, who was sobbing and wringing her hands, and calling on the Virgin and Tricotrin to aid and forgive her, for she had lost the child.

Viva, utterly regardless of the woe that she had caused, bounded into their midst, and held the jessamine branch, with its yellow stars, before their astonished eyes.

'Grand'mère, Grand'mère! Look here! You and

I knew that I was not as others are. See what the fairies have sent me!'

The old woman, breaking from the circle of her sympathizers, threw her arms round her recovered treasure, scolding and caressing her, praising the saints and reproving the wanderer, all in one breath: but Viva shook aside her embrace with a certain impatience.

'I had a right to go where I chose!' she cried; 'and look here! were not these well worth the straying for? Oh, you do not know what I have seen,—such things! such things! And I fell asleep at last in the temple of the flowers; and while I slept it was all changed, and every blossom turned into a fairy, and every bird into a wood-elf; and when I awoke there were these in my lap, and the magic ring hung on the great amber jessamine!'

Her audience were dumb with solemn amaze. Viva, unconscious of her own exaggeration, and working herself into the full credence that all had been as she told it, stood in their circle, proud with all the pride of one selected by fate for an extraordinary distinction, and smiling on them with contemptuous benignity.

'Oh! you have never known such a wonder—you!' she said, with scorn at the mutterings of the awe-stricken dairy-women. 'Of course you have not; one must be of that world ere one beholds it. Your cows chew the daisies and buttercups, only

tasting in them food to make milk; but none the less do fairies and elves live under the grasses for those who have sight that can see them. Yes; it was all as I tell you. The place was full of a glory, and I heard the most exquisite music—so soft! so soft!—and you can feel the fruit, and smell it, and eat it, if you doubt; and you can take the jessamine in your hand, if you like, and watch the ring on it sparkle and flash!'

'It is very strange!' murmured Grand'mère anxiously, while amongst the women the myth soon grew into an article of faith, with the giant growth of any popular delusion; but they held aloof from touching either the fruit or the flower.

'You are afraid!' cried Viva, with more and more cruel disdain. 'Do you suppose they would give what would hurt me?'—and she pressed a peach to her curling red lips.

Grand'mère caught her hand with a scream.

'Child! child! If the fruit be unholy!—'

'Pooh!' laughed Viva, setting her pearly teeth in the luscious, juicy pulp.

They watched her, expecting some horrible change; what they knew not: but all they saw was a child enjoying a fruit. Viva, however, had only done it out of bravado. She was not by any means secure herself that some extraordinary transformation might not take place in her, though she had too much of the Eve to resist the temptation of trying;

and she felt a sense of relief, that she would have scorned to acknowledge, when the peach had been eaten down to its stone, and no awful results had ensued.

Encouraged by her exemption from evil, the women ventured at length to stretch timid hands out for the jessamine bough, and gaze at the ring that hung on it, and babble amongst themselves with voluble excitability. Grand'mère's face alone remained wistful and anxious, and her tongue was mute.

'It is truly a noble bauble,' was all she said; 'but how canst thou tell, child, whether it will give thee pleasure or pain? It came to thee for an act of disobedience.'

Viva, infuriated, and full of outraged dignity, seized the jessamine out of her hand, and went off by herself to a distant nook of the dairy, and began counting her grapes and her oranges.

'You are a set of senseless peasants!' she muttered: the brown bright mouse-like eyes of the old woman were dimmed a moment with tears she would not shed; but Viva, engrossed in making the sunset rays play on her jewel, never saw that dumb reproach.

The milk-women were very angered, and called her a spoilt insolent baby, and jabbered hard things of her in under-tones, and began to believe all this magical story a lie. She cast one glance of supreme scorn upon them, then turned her back to them

where she sat on her stool, and put the jessamine on her hair, and the ring on her finger.

There was a pleasant meal set ready in the dairy chamber, of honey, and cakes, and coffee, and hard eggs; a meal whose enjoyment her absence and the anxiety it had involved, had spoiled and postponed. Sarazin's niece came kindly though shyly to her and pressed her to join in it; Viva was extremely hungry, having eaten nothing since her forenoon bread and chestnuts in the boat, but she was too proud to deign to acknowledge it, and would have died of starvation rather than have shared in their supper. She shook her head in petulant negative: and sat alone eating her fairy grapes, which were delicious indeed, but unsatisfactory, save to her pride.

When the time came to leave the dairy-house for the boat, she vouchsafed them never a word, but swept out through the huge brass pans on the floor with the step of a young sovereign, and passed into the soft grey evening with the jessamine crown glittering like a wreath of golden stars upon her head.

'If that be how jewels change the temper, they must be the curse of the world,' muttered Grand'mere.

Viva heard; but she would not deign to reply.

'She is a vain wicked thing: she will bring the Virelois to shame,' said one of the dairy maids,

standing with arms akimbo, on the lintel of the door.

'Do you believe in that story? She told it like the truth?' asked another.

'It may be; such things have been known,' said a third, cautiously.

'But we have lived here all our lives, and never heard of the like at Villiers?' responded the sceptic from the doorway. 'If the young lord were here, I should say it was one of his tricks.'

The conclave laughed, the suggestion was agreeable: to have traced an envied distinction to a fount of evil is the sweetest palliative to jealous mortification.

'She called us peasants,' continued the cynic in the porch. 'I had a good mind to tell her we were not bastards, but knew who our mothers and fathers were, which is much more than she can say, and I would have said it too, if it had not been for the poor old Grand'mère,'—and she plucked a spray of honeysuckle from the outside wall and bit it spitefully, regretting her excess of good nature.

Over the broad green pastures that stretched around the dairies, two herdsmen came driving up some of the cows to their stalls, pretty smooth-hided lowing creatures, with sweet-toned bells that sounded pleasantly through the evening stillness. Both animals and men were well at Villiers; they were never overtasked, and they were ever gently treated.

'What news, friend Jourdan?' called out the girl from the doorway to the cow-herd nearer her. There was very little news at Villiers at such seasons as its lord was absent.

'Piffirie has foaled,' said Jourdan, meaning a favourite farm mare.

'Ah, bah! And what else?'

'The mill people say their son has got a first-class medal at Paris for his painting. Thou remem-berest him?—that idle simpleton who was for ever chalking over the stable walls, and staring at dirt and stones and mosses?'

'A medal! And the fool could not drive a cow straight!' laughed the woman, with her hands in her side. 'What else?'

'Nothing. Yes, wait,—the bull Georgeo broke his feeding tether, and led us a fine dance this morn-ing; and they tell me the young seigneur has come back unexpectedly, and will stay here some weeks. He is in disgrace for some freak; so they say—'

And he passed on with his herd to the fresh-smelling, fresh-foddered stables, away to the left.

The dairy-girl in the porch clapped her hands above her head, and shouted with gleeful triumph.

'I said if he only were back! Do ye hear, Paule, Claudine, Lisette? He is back! Ah, ha! So much for the tale of the fairies! so much for the worth of her truth! The ring, the ring! It is not a marriage ring, I guess—ha, ha!'

And she laughed till the rafters rang where she stood under the honeysuckles;—for jealousy is cruel as the grave.

The boat went home in silence. Sarazin was tired; Grand'mère full of thought; the child's heart swelled with rage and pride where she sat with her hands full of the magic fruits, and her eyes watching the star-rays play on the jewel she wore. Save in the utterance of their good-nights none of them spoke a word.

The dog barked, the white cat purred, even Roi Doré woke on his perch to crow a welcome; Viva took no notice of any one of them. Was she who came back dowered with elfin gifts to heed such common sounds?

Moreover she was not quite at ease with herself. And one must be very much at ease to enjoy such tender, homely, innocent things as these.

Grand'mère got some bread and some honeycomb and some milk, and brought them to her in silence; but Viva left the food almost untasted, though she needed it: she knew she had been wrong. They went upstairs in the clear moonlight, needing no other light, and the child undressed herself slowly, with the moonbeams falling about her fair round limbs, and shining shower of hair.

The Virelois, still in silence, opened her book of hours and read—knowing the words by heart, and forgetting to turn over the pages.

Suddenly Viva sprang to her, and threw her arms about her.

'Grand'mère, I was wicked! I am sorry!'

The old woman's firm lips quivered.

'That is enough,' she said, softly; then she laid her hands on the girl's shoulders, and held them there, looking straight down into her face as she knelt.

'That was a true tale you told us this day?"

Viva's eyes met hers full and fearlessly.

'Quite true, Grand'mère.'

'It is strange!' murmured Grand'mère: then she stooped and kissed the Waif's flushed, wondering, eager face.

'The saints take thee in their holy keeping! Go—say thy prayers.'

CHAPTER X.

VIVA, two days later, was lying wide awake in her little white nest, under the eaves, while still the first tittering of her friends the swallows amongst the ivy was the only sound of the coming day, and Roi Doré, in the shed hard by, was giving his first challenge to the yet unrisen sun. Her heart was in a tumult of glad excitation: for the first time the romance, befitting such a fairy-princess as she, had touched her life; for the first time those long-careless elfin ancestors of hers had bethought them of her, and had sent her a visitant from their immortal home. The first page of that bright sealed book of Faerie, which she called her Future, had been opened to her gaze; the charmed reading of the mystic volume had commenced. An irreparable loss had come to her, which wore to her enchanted eyes the brilliancy of an

immeasurable gain:—her childhood had gone for ever.

Viva lying awake there in the dulness of the dawn, was dreaming of the wonderful things that had glorified the days gone by: decidedly those fairy-progenitors had remembered her, and sent her a Fairy Prince at last!

It had happened in this wise.

The previous morning had been very hot; hot to tropical fervour, even in the cool old convent gardens, with their deep lush grass, their silent, darkened, flower-filled ways, their noiseless air syringa scented, and moved by the silent wings of countless birds.

The child had been in some disgrace, and given a Latin canticle to learn; and, banished into solitude, had learned her task with random quickness, knowing nothing of its meaning, and then resigned herself to indolent delight, lying half covered with the thyme and plumes of spear-grass, and doing nothing in sublime content. Hours had drifted over her uncounted, when the boughs above her bent, their leafage rustled, and close beside her dropped—a Fairy Prince, as Viva instantly concluded. A youth of two-and-twenty years, or somewhat more; dressed in dark velvet, like an old picture, delicate, gracious, very fair to look at, and with a voice like music. He had let himself fall from the convent wall—climbed by the ivy's aid—and for the first time

in her life, Viva, long caressed by the voices of honest affection, heard the dangerous voice of adulation.

The innocent but supreme vanity of the child made her, though startled, amazed, perplexed, and a little frightened, quickly grasp the flattering truth that it was her own loveliness—seen on the highway road he told her—which had incited him to this adventurous experiment; and her visitant commanded a soft sweet eloquence that won its way at once to her hearing. She did not comprehend one half that he said, nothing that he implied; but she knew the one fact—that he thought her very beautiful,—and was too well content with it to refuse to hear him ring the changes on it.

Nature had planted in her an innate coquetry, as thoroughly instinctive as a bird's flying, and the instinct moved her now without her knowing it. Flushed, startled, infinitely fair, half risen from her bed of fragrant grasses, she gazed at her young adorer, and listened breathless to his utterances; but the coy, proud, arch, malicious, feminine nature in her, taught her to parry his words, and play with his worship, in an impulse to defend herself and torment him, that astonished one who had thought to find her some shy, simple, pretty idiot of the peasantry.

Viva—by nature wholly free from shyness, and proud of herself from her conviction of her lofty birth—thought nothing more charming than such

an interruption of the too even tenour of her days; all the more charming because of the atrocious crime the stranger's presence formed against all the laws of her detested foes the nuns. She was perfectly aware that she was sinning against all their rules in not fleeing instantly from this intruder; but the rebellion was just what she enjoyed. His oratory was most silvery sweet on her ear, for it told her only of herself; and half willing, half reluctant, she listened.

It was just what suited that old, shadowy, luscious-scented garden, and such an enchanted princess as herself, to be thus beset under the mulberry-shadows by such a wooer!

Of love, in men's and women's meaning, the Fille des Fées had no conception; this was only worship, she thought, such as in her fairy stories the captured Prince always gave the sovereign Beauty. The youth was facile of tongue, in very brief space he had filled her brain with intoxicating images of herself, learned all she had to tell of her short history, and conjured up before her magnificent visions of the world from which she was shut out: he might have progressed yet further, but that the voice of Sœur Séraphine calling for Viva and the Latin canticle interrupted his success. Not caring to be caught in that rookery of women, the young stranger murmured his hurried and tender farewell, swung himself lightly by branch and ivy coil up the steep wall, and disappeared,

leaving her in a tumult of excitement, which sent her with scarlet cheeks and dancing eyes to the call of Sœur Séraphine, and reduced all memory of the canticle to chaos.

She awoke the next morning, feverish with wonder and expectation; he had begged her to meet him at the beech-tree, and had promised to tell her of a thousand marvellous things. She had told Grand'-mère, and Grand'mère had not been as pleased as she had anticipated; Grand'mère had not taken her view of the stranger; Grand'mère had scornfully suggested that if he were a fairy prince he would not be under the necessity of climbing earthly walls; Grand'mère had finally stated that it must have been he who had had to do with the ring up at Villiers, and declared that she thought Tricotrin would not like her to go to the beech-tree. Whereupon Viva, self-willed, but frank as the day, had declared that she would go, that nothing should prevent her, and had been fiery, and wayward, and, as she well knew, naughty. She had gone to bed with naughtiness in her soul, and awoke with it.

When she threw open her little lattice, close under its sill, where a robin's nest had been made in the spring, and was still there though the young redbreasts had all flown, there gleamed something of all colours with a shimmer of gold and of silver. It lay on the nest; trembling with delight she drew it up

through the casement: it was a collar of exquisite workmanship wreathed with forget-me-nots in turquoises and opals—ten thousand times more beautiful than the silver wreath of that odious Adèle!

With the selfsame action as poor Gretchen's, Viva, laughing, and almost crying with joy, clasped the lovely thing round her own white throat, and gazed enraptured at her own reflection in her tiny glass, and rushed down-stairs to where the old woman was busied with the breakfast-coffee.

'Grand'mère! Grand'mère! Look! Was he not a fairy prince after all?'

Grand'mere looked, and, to Viva's amazement, seemed troubled; even whilst woman-like she marvelled at the beauty of the toy.

'The only fairy prince the world holds—a rich man,' she muttered. 'Your throat is more graceful without it, my little one!'

'Grand'mère!' cried Viva, in supreme scorn, 'that is because I am dressed like a child—like a peasant! If you saw me with silks and laces and all that one ought to have!'

'Ought to have!' murmured the old woman as she set down the brown rolls and the steaming milk. 'There is no one from whom you could claim even *these* as your right, Viva.'

Viva did not hear the rebuke; she was standing in ecstasy before a great burnished copper cauldron that served as a mirror, watching the sunshine play

on her necklace. Grand'mère was very silent during the breakfast, though her cheerful loquacious tongue was generally never still over her coffee. Viva was silent, too, angered that her splendid possession had not met with more enthusiasm. Already the jewels on her throat had cast a shadow on her young soul; they were so costly and so brilliant that all the dear familiar things of her home—even Grand'mère's brown face in its frame of white linen—looked common and unwelcome.

'You will go to the beech-tree?' asked the old woman.

The child tossed her spirited head.

'Of course! I said so!'

But when Viva came in the late afternoon to her tryst, under the beech boughs, knitting her scarlet worsted, sat Grand'mère.

Viva could have cried, and her prince, when he came also, could have cursed, with vexation. But he was not so frank as the Waif; he showed no displeasure; on the contrary he talked so softly and charmingly, showed so graceful a respect towards the old age of the Virelois, and evinced such interest in all he had heard of Tricotrin, that even Grand'mère's prejudices began to dissolve.

'She is so lovely; she is fit to be a princess in earnest, the little angel!' thought the latter. 'The young man speaks well—he has a fair face—who knows? . . . . .'

And her thoughts drifted on building castles almost as aërial and baseless as Viva's.

He, when he left them and sauntered away to where his servants and horses waited in the shadow, mused to himself.

'The old fool will give me more trouble than the young one. But the child is so handsome—I never met with her rival—she will be worth some patience and some strategy!'

For the boy, with his delicate face and his tender voice, was at heart the coldest of sensualists; and youth is not seldom the most cruel of egotists.

'Is he not a prince now, Grand'mère?' laughed Viva, in triumph. The old woman mused.

'He is well-spoken,' she cried, cautiously. 'But I misdoubt if Tricotrin will wish you to keep that pretty toy; and,—do you like this one as well as that great lord of Villiers that you told me about?'

'Oh no!' cried Viva, fervently, careless of how her confession hurt her present hero. '*He* looked like a king, a Charlemagne, or a David, or an Arthur, you know. This one is only like a Prince Fainéant!'

And she laughed mischievously at her own merry conceit. She was delighted that 'this one' should worship her, but she had no inclination to worship him.

'It is dangerous,' thought the old woman, anxiously. 'Ah, if Tricotrin were only a man in a

house, like a Christian, instead of always wandering, wandering, wandering, like a gypsy, one could let him know, and he would come. M. le Curé would write for me. But he is like the wind, going all over the earth, no one knows why or whither. Well! the good saints have her in her keeping;—though to be sure one does not know whether she was ever baptized, which may make them indifferent. But I do not think they would forsake an innocent child for that; and—Tricotrin is a sorcerer, he will come if any real peril touches her.'

So she comforted herself with the remembrance of the occult powers of Viva's guardian, and did not try to discover who the young man was, lest she should find him of a rank that would dazzle with still more fatal effect the eminence-seeking eyes of the ambitious Waif.

To the best of her power the good old creature tried to screen the child from the sight or approach of this dangerous stranger. But the resources that riches command, and the subtilty of such love as the young voluptuary had conceived for the 'Light of the Loire,' were more than a match for the Virelois' honest and simple endeavours.

He made no more trysts since Viva so innocently revealed them, but over and over again he waylaid her, in the woods, on the highroad, at the ferry, or in the convent-garden when she was condemned to solitude for inattention or insolence;

and such faults were now more common than ever. Viva was of necessity often alone; and he had many opportunities to gain her ear. He filled it with many hyperboles about her own loveliness, with many asseverations of his own homage to it, and with what was yet more alluring to her, many pictures of the 'world' for which she longed. Cities of Italy all glowing with flowers and wild with festivals; masked balls all a-glitter with rich hues and shining jewels; summer-fêtes with the toy-boats drifting on summer-lakes to palace-steps hidden in myrtle and oranges; Paris itself in its nights of rejoicing, with the churches all domes of sparkling fire, and each street a stream of laughing life—all these he painted to Viva, and, relying on the child's absolute ignorance, promised her deathless roses, royal power, every manner of glory and delight, if she would go thither with him. But Viva resisted this: she would have dearly liked it she told him for the sake of all those wonderful things which he promised her. But then—Tricotrin, Grand'mère, Roi Doré, Bébée, all that there were to leave!

He could not make her reconciled to flight from them all; and he soon found that in her love for Tricotrin—whom he held in light scorn, never having seen, as some vagabond scoundrel—lay the stoutest foe he had to encounter. Without this he might easily have lured her to her own ruin by those chief agents of her sex's destruction, vanity and

the desire of wealth. It was in her love for her protector that lay the only shield she had; unconscious as she was of her own danger. It was in vain that her wooer promised to acquaint Tricotrin of her presence in Paris if she once would but go there; Viva would shake her head and ask him mournfully how could he do that when no one knew where Tricotrin lived? It was no less in vain that he strove to persuade her that Tricotrin could not be angered, but would rather be pleased that she should have any pleasure. Her heart was too loyal to her only friend to let her be induced to go from the home that he gave her, unknown to him.

Moreover, Viva was rather deterred by her consciousness that Grand'mère did not approve of the stranger, or of his jewelled toys, or of any part of the business; and the disapproval of the good indulgent old woman was so rare on any project of the child's, that it had a weight with Viva which none of the sermons of those Sisters, who were always scolding her, would have possessed. Her young suitor was irritated at the slow progress he made, he was used to conquer quickly, and the unforeseen difficulty he had here piqued his pride and his self-admiration.

'We must come to a climax,' he thought one evening as he sauntered to meet her. 'It is no use playing the Faust any longer for nothing; and if ever there were a Gretchen whom jewels will tempt and console it is this little vain ignoramus!'

As he mused he came near her; standing beside a water-spring with the jug she had come to fill hanging empty in her hand, whilst she dreamed of—not himself, though he flattered himself that she did so—but of her own perfections as he had mirrored them to her.

They were young; but both their loves were as egotistic and as insincere as though they were two subtle courtiers playing at sentiment for the sake of intrigue. It is not always in youth that the loves are the strongest or purest. The insincerity and the egotism were unconscious in her, in him they were part of his system; but with both they were there.

'Viva!' he whispered as he stole behind her. 'That is too much Cinderella's work for my Princess!'

The poor little princess coloured angrily: she was only too quick herself to disdain useful errands.

'Grand'mère is old, and the water is far to fetch,' she said, hurriedly, apologizing for doing what duty, and affection, and veneration for age alike demanded. So soon had the poison he had sown borne fruit.

'You can do these things and look a princess still!' he murmured. 'Still, I would see you where slaves should obey your slightest word.'

'Yes!' sighed Viva.

He always spoke in hyperbole to her, and the child's imagination was intoxicated by it.

'Well! Come, then! I must leave your province with to-morrow.'

'Leave it!'

She turned a little pale, and looked up startled: she was not prepared to lose this generous eloquent visitant, who had come to break, with the charm of so much mystery, the too tranquil tenour of her days.

'Leave it? Yes. Will you regret me?'

'Oh indeed! I should miss you so much!'

Her face grew very sad and earnest. She felt her lips quiver a little. She did not like to think her fairy-story was going thus soon to be broken off without any more wonder-flowers blooming from it for her.

'Then you love me, my fairest?'

'I try to do so,' said Viva, softly.

It was the truth; she did try. She thought he deserved her love, he was so good to her; but, in real fact, she did not give him quite so much genuine fondness as she gave Roi Doré. He bit his lip with irritation; he knew the total absence of love that spoke in the answer. Still, the chagrin and the mortification only made him more resolute in pursuit.

'All I dare hope is to make you love me one day!' he murmured caressingly. 'To be loved as I love were too much to desire; but, if you would only trust yourself to me, it should go hard but I

would win your heart. Come! Come to that world I have so often painted to you. Come—to be its idol, its empress, its treasure!'

'I should dearly love it!' sighed Viva, wistfully, 'but—'

'There is no "but,"' murmured her tempter. 'How lost you are here! A ferryman, a swineherd, a postillion by hazard, the only creatures that see what a king must adore! If this man whom you speak of, cared really for you, would he keep you in poverty and obscurity, thus? Come with me, my fairest. You shall be queen of Paris, I swear to you!'

The child sighed again. Her cheeks were burning, her eyes glittering, her whole soul intoxicated. Was he a prince of France? she thought. Why not? And then to refuse him when he was willing to take her to share all his glories!

His arm stole round her, lightly brushing the hanging profusion of her fair curls.

'Come! come! to have France for your sovereignty, and all men who look once in your beautiful eyes for your slaves!'

Viva glanced up, half vaguely terrified, but still in a trance of incredulous and dream-like rapture. With the next moment she might have said yes, —she might have rushed to her own ruin, blind with the longing for change and for power,—she might have fallen headlong into the abyss opened beneath her;—but one word was her saviour.

That word was;—'Viva!'

Under the trees stood Tricotrin.

With a bound like a deer's she sprang to him. Her young lover stood, sorely discomfited, gazing in blank amazement, in bitter annoyance, at this man of whom he had heard so much, and whom he had never seen; who came so unwelcomely, in so untimely a moment, between him and his prey. Tricotrin's bright eyes swept over him, and a great wrath gleamed in them; but he stroked the girl's hair caressingly.

'Who is your friend, Viva?'

'A stranger; a prince, I think!' she whispered eagerly. 'And he has given me beautiful toys, all covered with jewels, lovelier than the gold things they have on the altar; and he says if I will go with him he will show me Paris illuminated, and give me roses that will never die, and diamonds, and riches, and the life of an empress! May I go? and will you go too? and we can make Grand'mère so happy! And he says that kings' daughters will not be noticed when *I* pass through the streets!'

The breathless words were poured out in all their childish mingling of selfishness and generosity, of innocence and vanity;—Tricotrin listened, then laid his hand gently on her shoulder:

'Go to Grand'mère, Viva. I will talk with this good friend of yours, and hear a little of all these wonderful things to which he invites us. Do as I

tell you, my child. You shall not lose the deathless roses by obedience.'

Viva looked at them alternately a little wistfully; she was loth to go.

'He has been so kind!' she murmured softly; 'and I *should* like to go, if I may!'

Then she obeyed, and passed from them towards the cottage, her head turning still wistfully back to them, with the empty jug still hanging in her hand, her errand to the water-spout forgotten.

Tricotrin stood in silence, waiting till she should be beyond hearing. The youth stood his ground, too proud to turn away, but livid with chagrin, rage, and mortification; marvelling also at the aspect of the man who had come thus between him and his soul's desire. He had thought with light contempt of the wanderer, whom the old peasant deified and the child adored, as of some poverty-stricken, folly-steeped vagabond; some strolling musician, since they spoke of his art; some half-outlawed eccentric, whom he could quiet with coin. He was bewildered at the poetic beauty, the careless, fearless bearing, the magnificent manhood of this Bohemian who stood before him in the linen blouse of the people, and with a little black monkey peering, witch-like, from over his shoulder.

Viva once out of sight Tricotrin swung round, his eyes like blue lightning in their wrath.

'So, Lord Chanrellon! this is the thief's work in which you spend your summer-time!'

The young man looked at him in silence, startled into speechless amazement at the sound of the name that he himself bore, a name he had carefully concealed through the whole of the siege he had laid to Viva. He recovered himself with an effort.

'Since you know my title,' he said, with chill languor, 'you know also the respect due to it. Know still further that I have no wish to parley with you on any subject.'

'That I will warrant you have not! But your wishes are not what I shall consult. Do you know that I could kill you where you stand just as easily as I could break that slender sapling asunder; and, —by God!—I have a mind to do it, too, you beardless libertine, you smiling sensualist!'

His height towered above the young man's slight stature; his voice rolled out in sonorous passion; his chest heaved with his quickened breathing. A momentary horror seized his hearer, who shrank back with an involuntary impulse, while his clear brown cheek turned white like a fainting woman's. Who could tell, he thought, what the vengeance of this lawless republican might be?

Tricotrin saw the fear of him, and laughed bitterly in his wrath.

'Pshaw, child! Men do not kill such things as you, though it is dangerous to spare adders because they look so small; a wound unto death is one's common reward for the misplaced compassion! Well,

what plea do you raise in defence of your villany?'

The youth laughed coldly and scornfully.

'I am not accustomed to raise pleas for my actions; still less should I do so to an inferior. If I needed one, however, the easiest would be found in the overtures that were made to me by your—'

The lie faltered and died unfinished on his tongue. He knew that as little might a lion be enraged with impunity as this man be goaded with safety. He replaced his falsehood with a scoff.

'Pardon me! I can understand your annoyance. The annoyance of losing the one ewe lamb! But if I remember the Bible story aright, the ewe-lamb went with much eagerness to the sacrifice. Your Viva does not differ from Bathsheba! Besides, I mean very well by her. The charming little fool is wholly lost here.'

Tricotrin's hands fell on his shoulders, and shook him to and fro, as the jaws of a lion can shake what they seize but forbear to destroy.

'Another word like these and I will fling you out into that water, to sink or swim as you may!'

The youth freed himself from the grasp with difficulty, growing pale with rage and fear.

'It would do you too much honour to resent your outrage myself,' he said insolently; 'I will send my grooms to the task.'

Tricotrin, even in the tempest of his wrath,

laughed at the threat with his old ironic amusement.

'You will? Indeed! It will be a mistake—for your grooms! For the rest, my lord, as you term yourself,—'

'I decline any more speech with you!'

'Pshaw! You will listen as long as I choose,' answered Tricotrin, with contemptuous command. 'Honour you have none; good faith you have none; but your father has both. If you do not swear that from this hour Viva is free from your vile temptations, and keep your oath to the letter, Estmere shall learn what the heir to his name can become!'

The young man broke in on the words with a laugh of insolent ridicule.

'The Earl will not aid you much! He and I are very distant acquaintances. Besides, Estmere has quite youth enough in him to be no saint himself.'

A darker storm swept over Tricotrin's face.

'Europe reveres your father; cannot you do so much?' he said sternly. 'That you please him ill, I doubt not. Lord Estmere is a gentleman, a just man, an upright man, a man of noble temper and pure honour. You must degrade him bitterly—you!—the son of such a mother!'

The young man's features flushed duskily with a flush of shame, even whilst absolute amaze possessed and held him silent.

Tricotrin's eyes softened a little as he saw that

reddened, painful shadow on the insolent young face before him.

'I would not have taunted you by your mother's dishonour if you had not sought to lure a creature, innocent as the very doves, into dishonoured life,' he said gravely. 'But,—you make me doubt, you make me disbelieve that you can come of Estmere's race.'

'Estmere!' echoed his hearer, in bitter impatience of his father's name, 'Estmere! You prate of Estmere! What can he be to you?'

'What he is to all the world,—what his son will never be—a gentleman! He bears you no love, my young sir. You outrage, offend, incense him at every turn and every phase of your worthless life. What mercy do you think he will show you if I tell him of some of your pastimes, of some of your vices? of your fashion of spending the last night of April, in Paris, this very year?'

The youth started and grew deadly pale.

'Good God! What are you?' he muttered. 'Devil, or sorcerer, that you know these things?'

'One needs to be neither to know how you steep yourself in the foulness of orgies that many a debauchee would recoil from in disgust!' answered Tricotrin with the sonorous force of his voice ringing loud in disdain. 'Pshaw, boy! Do you think I cannot tell the truth of even such pitiful things as your valueless years? I know the shame of

your vices—of your crimes,—my young Commodus. Your father does not: well for you that that eagle soars far too high to see where you riot with the carrion birds! Your mother lay in his bosom to rend his great heart with her treacherous talons; you, fit son of the traitress, claim his race and his name to sully them both, and drag both through the mud of the foulest of licence! He cannot tear his name from you; he cannot rescue his race from your mother's pollution of it; he cannot prevent your present rank or your future succession. But you know what he is,—you know how he can judge and how he can punish,—now,—shall he hear the whole vile truth of his heir's brutal orgies? Or will you purchase my silence by leaving in peace what I cherish?'

Viva's lover stood irresolute, pale, tremulous with rage, with wonder, with baffled hatred, with ignominious submission. Above all the contesting emotions which shattered his insolence and broke asunder his self-control, was one supreme all-absorbing astonishment at this man, who arraigned him with the authority of a king, with the disdain of a superior, with the omniscience of a god!

Even in that moment of humiliation and powerless passion, a curious dreamy speculation came on him, and made him wonder how, if such men as these were the people, it arrived that the people did not govern and rule?

'Choose!' said Tricotrin simply. 'Do I know too much of you for you to oppose my will any longer? Or must I take sharper means to protect what is innocent from your toils?'

He did not answer: he was irresolute. A galled pride, a vacillating fury, combated with him the impulse of prudence and fear. He loathed to bend and surrender; yet he dared not provoke vengeance from one who knew his worst secrets.

'Choose!' said Tricotrin with fiery impatience. 'No matter to me the choice that you make! Do you renounce your pursuit?—or do I go to Estmere?'

'Were either Estmere or you such anchorites in your youth?'—

The mortified pride, the ignoble fear of the young man's heart took refuge in a feeble taunt and evasion.

Tricotrin smiled contemptuously.

'Neither of us. Think you that I blame a boy's ardent follies?—a young man's lawless loves? Think you I do not know how sweet women's lips are in our youth, and how hard to resist the soft glance of their eyes? I make excuse for the swift unthinking sins of young years; I can pardon error where warm passion blinds conscience and tempts all the senses. But that is not your crime. You,—cool, cold, and wary; not loving, only desiring; not seeking a heart to beat echo to yours, but only seeking new prey to

first seize, then throw away;—you,—weave lie on lie to trap a child in her ignorance, you—with all a boy's cruelty have all the greybeard's slow science, you—are a traitor, a thief, and a liar!'

The young man, stung beyond endurance, sprang on him to strike a blow for each word; Tricotrin caught his arm and held it there, the arm uplifted, the blow unstruck.

'I like you better for that,' he said briefly. 'There is some touch of the old race in you, though very little. But it is hardly worth while to resent what is true. It were better to admit it with apology and remorse. Now—make your choice. Leave France for a year on any pretext you will;—or stay and see what your father says of the things I can tell him. It is no matter to me which you select. Either course will equally serve me.'

With that he loosened his hold on the boy's arm, and turned from him, leaving his foe to an impotent and feverish rage—the rage of a proud, self-engrossed, pampered, imperious nature against the only creature who had ever crossed its purpose or arraigned its actions.

Calmly as he had spoken to his antagonist there was no calmness on his face as he walked on alone; walked on, away from the river, and towards Viva's home. Tempestuous pain, and anger, and many mingling unanalyzed emotions, had been awakened in him. Wrath was rare with him, and

when it woke was as the wrath of the lions; moreover many things of bitterness, many memories long buried, stirred in him under the suddenness of this peril to the one he had chosen to defend. He had needed to ask no questions; he had felt what the young man's object was, and what her danger, the first moment that his eyes had lit on them together under the trees about the water freshet. And it had filled him with an almost ungovernable passion. The insult, the jeopardy, for her, would have been, from any one, outrage enough to make his blood in flame; but from the son of Estmere, they took a darker colour, they dealt a deeper blow.

'Must they have even *her?*' he said in his soul.

At any time it would have been painful to him to know that the risks of womanhood so nearly approached the child who to him was but such a child still; that the corruption of worldly wishes and worldly temptations had so soon found her out in her solitude to assail her; that the insidious graces of youth and of love had crept in to assault and to taint the young heart, whose transparency, and whose pureness from all evil knowledge, had been his delight. He had saved her from death, and sustained life in her through all the years of her sunny existence, which, through him, had never been darkened by a single cloud;—and his reward was, that

the first beardless stranger who took the trouble could lead her away with a few honeyed words!

The desertion struck a heavier pang into Tricotrin's heart than he, the laughing philosopher, cared that anything should do. He would have given up much for Viva—nay, had given up much many a time to be able to send gold enough to maintain her in ease and in some sort of grace,—and she! She was willing to go away from him to the first handsome heartless youth that entreated her!

There was a tinge of jealous pain in him, which made the caprice and the ingratitude in her strike him doubly sharply.

But as he had done when in wrath with the Greek Canaris, so he did now,—he strove against and shook off the alien regret. He lifted his head and looked at the sunset which was burning, rich and red, low down in the west.

'So I and his son have crossed!' he murmured. 'Ah! That is droll, Mistigri. What is not droll in this world? Tragi-comedy everywhere. How we waste our time in wrath!—and neglect all that might raise our souls. How many men will look at *that* to-night? Not one in a million; the sun sets every day,—who cares? God has cast beauty broadcast all over the earth, the gentlest teacher we can have;—and who thinks to thank God for it?'

He stood a while looking with eagle eyes at the glorious spectacle;—the broad field of glowing light,

the clouds sun-flushed to scarlet, the blue sky deepened into purple, the shafts of the dying rays slanting upward like golden spears :—stood till all the radiance sank away into the deep peace of the early night.

Then having thus exorcised his darker spirit, he moved away with his head bowed like one who turns from that which is holier and greater than himself, and from which he has sought both counsel and consolation.

CHAPTER XI.

HE went back to Viva.

At the door of her home she met him, lifting her face full of eagerness.

'May I go with him? Do you like him? Did he tell you all he told me?'

Tricotrin looked a moment away from her.

'You wish so much to go with this wonderful new friend, then?'

Viva gave a longing sigh.

'Oh yes! To see Paris illuminated!'

'Ah, capricious and true to your sex! Change—that is all you want!' he murmured impatiently. 'So! It is for the sake of Paris illuminated, is it? Would you go with him to a desert? to a dreary sun-burnt place?—to the sand-plains about Marseilles for example?'

Viva opened wide her large eyes in horror and sheer perplexity.

'Oh mon Dieu! No!'

Tricotrin smiled; his worst dread was dissipated, he saw that love had not even left its first breath here, that what had beguiled her was the city in its festival season.

'Listen, Viva,' he said gently, 'you love me well enough to believe what I tell you and to be content with it without asking its reason?'

Viva looked up a little stilled and startled.

'Oh yes!'

'And to be sure that my pleasure is in your joy, and that if I deny you aught, it is because I know that thing would be hurtful?'

Viva's eyes grew graver and less luminous.

'Of course! You are so good to me!'

'Then, Viva, it will pleasure me best that you should not talk more with this friend, and that you should not see Paris till you can go with me. It would not be well, and this young man would not be a wise and fitting guide for you there. Now, if you love me as I imagine, you will be content that because *I* say so, therefore it is true and right. Can I count on your trust thus far? It is much to ask, for I am disappointing you; but it is not so much that I think you will deny it me?'

There was an infinite sweetness, and a shadow of anxiety, in his eyes: that this creature owed him all, to the very saving of her sheer existence, the man was too generous even to remember;—far too gen-

erous to base on it any claim to her gratitude or her obedience. He waited for the assurance of her faith and allegiance, as though he were her debtor, and not she his for every crust she ate, and every draught she drank.

Viva was silent a moment; the tears were in her eyes, the tears were in her voice, she could not trust herself to speak, for she was very proud, and could not bear to show emotion;—the disappointment was bitter, very bitter to her. The great world had seemed to open its gates to her, and disclose such gorgeous and untold glories. With the words of her tempter such a pageant of splendour and wonder had spread before the vivid dreaming fancy of the child. Such lands of enchantment had risen before her, all for her sovereignty, and lit with a light that never shone upon earth! To behold these swept down suddenly, as impossible and forbidden, was a trial terrible and poignant.

Tricotrin watched her mutely.

She stood quiet, the tears she refused to let fall standing on her long drooped lashes, her face at first very flushed, and then equally colourless, all the keenness of her disappointment and something of her haughty wilfulness and resistance, spoken on a face eloquent of every thought, with the eloquence of the southern nations.

She looked up at length and caught the gaze of the eyes which watched her: their look touched

and won all that was generous, noble, and loving in her temper, all that was grateful and all that was unselfish : she saw that he to whom she knew that she owed life, home, protection, her very food and bed, grieved to be compelled to pain her, and asked her allegiance, not as his right, but as her free and gracious gift.

Then all that was best in her awoke. She threw her arms about him with grateful caressing affection, in a passionate repentance for that moment's disloyalty and hesitance.

'What could you ask that I would deny ! I would give you my life, and you would have a right to it, since you saved it ! I do not care for the diamonds, or the roses, or Paris, or the Fêtes, if you think I am better without them. It is enough that you wish me, your wish is my law ! '

Tricotrin stroked her hair tenderly, where her head leant against his heart ; he was silent for the instant, and his face lighted with the frank warm joy which had come there once before at the expression of her affection ;—he was as rejoiced at her faith in him as though he had never done anything to merit, or give him title to demand, it !

'I thank you, Viva mine ! ' he said, with a force which gave almost a tremor to his voice. 'That is generously and bravely said. You have given me the best gift there is in this world—Trust. In after years I will tell you why I seek it now.'

Viva leaned against him, speechless; she had given her allegiance loyally, and with love, but she was a child, and her disappointment was great; the tears were still in her voice, and her eyes, and she could not bear to betray them, lest he should be pained to see that the trust which he asked was fraught with sorrow to herself.

'And now—another point,' pursued Tricotrin. 'This stranger friend of yours gave you costly golden presents?'

'Yes!—beautiful ornaments!'

Her voice was very tremulous, and her eyes looked up with pitiful beseeching appeal; her lovely jewelled toys, with which in a thousand day-dreams she had fancied herself a Marquise, an Empress, Marie Antoinette in the brilliant days at Versailles, Louise d'Orléans in the gorgeous gatherings of the Palais Royal, anything, everything!—she should not surely have to part with them!

Tricotrin read the look; and smiled.

'Nay, child; for anything I take from you, you shall have as good. You are feminine, and I would not break your heart by robbing you of your first jewels! You are a child of the Fairies, but they forgot to dower you with Philosophy—*tant pis!* But the jewels your friend gave you must go back to him, though you shall be no loser.'

Viva's eyes glowed and dropped with shame.

'Was it so wicked to take them? I did not

know—he said it would be cruel and discourteous to refuse? I had no one to tell me, and—they were so pretty!'

'Wicked? No!' said Tricotrin, promptly: his chief desire in all he said was to conceal from her any hint or glimpse of what had been her tempter's motive and end, and to dissipate in no iota the innocence of her own danger which she enjoyed. 'It is nothing to cause you shame, Viva; it was most natural that the pretty toys beguiled your sight; are you to be wiser than all your generation, or stronger than all your sex? But now that *I* know, they must be returned to your friend; because I accept obligations from no man, and neither must you. We spoke of pride when we were together last; there is a pride that you may cherish in your heart's heart, Viva; the pride which will never be laid beneath a debt. There was no one to tell you, and you were a child, pleased with beautiful bagatelles, and there is nothing to grieve or to flush for, at all, in the fact that you were won into taking these adornments. But remember in the future that the woman who is proud, and honours herself, must take the gold and the gifts of no man. You would give your cheek to the caress of no stranger; never take from him that for which he might, were it only in mirth, ask you for a caress as his payment.'

Viva listened, the flush deep upon her forehead, her eyes drooped in humiliation, all the haughty

pride of her temper was roused by and followed his words, and the bitterness of the golden ornaments was far exceeding now the sweetness they had given.

'Send them back to him! Send them back! I hate them now!' she said, passionately, while the hot colour burned painfully in her face, and her lips quivered. 'He wanted to kiss me once, and I told him I was no peasant girl; but it showed how low I had fallen in his sight, how I had given him the right to despise me by taking his presents!—'

Her voice broke down, she flung herself upon the grass, and sobbed aloud half in grief, half in rage; her heart was not even touched by the loss of her tempter, but her pride was wounded to the quick. In the stead of the diamonds and the deathless roses, and all the golden, glorious, unknown world, this Waif and Stray of the Loire, who had the hauteur of a child-queen, had only the ruin of her shattered castles, and the misery, a thousand-fold greater, of having lost her own dignity, and stooped to abasement and dishonour!

And Tricotrin, who would have gone half across the world, and given a kingdom if he had had one, to avoid the sight of anything feminine in sorrow, found himself, all philosopher that he was, compelled to look on what he hated, and keep by him, for a minute or two at least, a cucumber that was very acid.

For he loved the girl with all the warmth of his generous and ardent nature; and he was obliged to deal her something of this sense of pain and of humiliation, lest a worse thing should come unto her, and the wood-dove fall a prey to some other tercel's beak.

'Oh, Mistigri, Mistigri!' murmured he to that inseparable confidante, with pathetic regret. 'How impossible it is for a philosopher to remain perfectly philosophical when he has once given way to such a miserable weakness as to take an interest in anything that is feminine!'

Viva lay on the grass in an abandonment of shame and sorrow, not for the golden toys, still less for their donor, but for those glorious castles in the air, that were all hurled down and had vanished like a dream of the night, and far more for the terrible sense that filled her of guiltiness and shame.

The Forbidden Fruit that had looked so fair had changed to the darkest and bitterest of ashes in the lips of this proud young daughter of Eve.

Tricotrin let the emotion have its way; and his own thoughts wandered, in a fiery wrath, from the child to her tempter, and from him to many things and many memories that were dark and heavy, and rarely allowed to cloud a mind which best loved the light of the sun, and the noon-day of clear philosophies, and the rich colours of wine-cups, and the aerial hues of a poet's fancies.

Then—when it had nearly spent itself—he stooped and laid his hand on her bowed head.

'Viva mine, keep thy tears back: life may want them, thou art a woman! Do not weep till thou hast erred, and that most surely thou hast not done now. Let none shame thee, save thyself; and let that never be. Thou art a child, and hadst a child's love of pretty toys; that is all; no harm is done. And remember—if thou grievest I am grieved. It is I who have disappointed thee; and each sigh thou shalt give for thy lost bagatelles and thy banished castles, will be a reproach to me.'

He had judged rightly the chord to touch. Viva could be led thus, though driven never.

She lifted her head, and smiled at him through her sorrows, a smile very loving, very wistful, and very proud.

'Then—I will not give them one regret!'

And he knew that the word she gave she would keep.

CHAPTER XII.

'MISTIGRI! Can a man be ever certain of his philosophy? Brutus had served her faithfully all his life, and broke down in his very last hour!' said Tricotrin, plaintively, as he stood smoking under the starlight in the porch, when Viva had sobbed herself to sleep under the eaves, with the tears still glistening on her closed lashes. 'You and I were wretched sentimentalists in saving the Waif, and I suppose we shall be so to the end, having once concerned ourselves with anything so irrational as the upsetting of her most far-sighted and excellently judicious mother's plans. I have been shockingly weak and unphilosophic to-day;—contemptible! Sentiment the second; and quite as bad as the first. I have interfered between her and the most lucrative trade of all for women who cannot be duchesses. My young lord's introduction would

have been an admirable one, and he was right that diamonds would have fallen in her lap by thousands; —she would have ruined her hundreds and tens of hundreds before two years, I dare say. The world would have raved of her, and she would have had a woman's most delicious empire,—the Power of Destruction. That young man was wise and practical, and I—I was unworldly, unphilosophic, everything that is contemptible, Mistigri! What business had I to put my oar in the boat, instead of letting her drift down the stream to the wine-washed roses and Messieurs les Grands Seigneurs? Ah, Grand'-mère, hark a moment!'

The little old brown woman, looking like a figure out of one of Ostade's pictures, as she moved across the broad swathes of moonlight that checkered her kitchen, came towards him, trembling somewhat, for she had a horrible doubt that something had gone wrong about the Prince Fainéant, and that she had acted with an infamous want of discretion and judgment.

'Grand'mère, why did you let that young wolf in lamb's clothing get the ear of the Waif?'

Grand'mère began to tremble more and more, and broke into a stream of self-excuses and of protestation. Tricotrin cut them short.

'I know, friend Virelois, I know. You are a woman, and he was comely to look at, and you fancied you heard the chimes of bridal bells, and

you thought he was a noble prince in disguise ?— '

'Oh, mon Dieu, Tricotrin ! how do you know all you do ?'

'Little birds tell me,' responded Tricotrin promptly. 'Silly woman ! What do you suppose the swallows fly in and out of the ivy all the day long, if it be not on messages ?'

Grand'mère paid no attention : her eyes were sad and anxious.

'Is there anything wrong with the young man ?' she asked, 'I had my fears : I did what I could. But you see——'

'It was the old story. Love laughing at locksmiths ; and the locksmiths do not exist, who can shut in such a thing as the Waif. Well, the young man will not come here any more ; and if you chance to hear he bears a high name, keep the knowledge to yourself, that is all. There are no disguised princes in the world ; and as for bridal-bells,—no man loves them very much, and rich men not at all.'

Grand'mère shuddered, lifting her hands.

'Ah—h—h ! The nobles are so wicked.'

'Not in the least,' Tricotrin contradicted. 'They are no more wicked than other men ; not so much so indeed, because they are educated. Vice is as ripe in villages as in cities, and to one peasant that "falls" for a gentleman's wooing there are ten-score that do so at the asking of Pierre the postillion or Jacquot the cowherd. Well—Grand'mère, you

loved honour and honesty all the days of your life; what have your deities done for you?'

'Kept my pot empty many a time, but my conscience clean, thank God.'

Tricotrin looked at her with the smile that was epigram, satire, sunlight, and sadness all in one.

'Grand'mère! You, the disciple of virtue, are the strongest irony upon her that a satirist could paint! Your pot empty?—ah! And if you had been a philosophically-wicked woman it would have overflowed with fat fowls and good rice? This Prince Fainéant was the wise man; and I the fool. Jeanne, the honest woman, clicks about in wooden shoes, sleeps on a flock bed, lives on black crusts and onion-soups, gets withered and crippled and weather-stained before she is at middle-age, toils in the snow and the sun to keep body and soul together, and dies in the workhouse to be buried as a pauper. Euphrasie, the bad woman, has pretty, warm, broidered slippers, sleeps between cambric sheets, lies in cachemires as her carriage rolls along, eats and drinks the best of all lands, laughs through life to a gay opera-air, has a happy paganism that makes her quite untroubled with her future, and when she retires on her pirated gains, can buy absolution from any church extant, die in the odour of sanctity, and have her noble qualities blazoned on a marble tomb. That is what Virtue and Vice are, Grand'mère, and how they pay their servitors.'

Grand'mère stood in the strip of moonlight, her head pensively on one side, her little brown face sad and bewildered. Then suddenly the old woman raised herself erect, and her still bright eyes took a resolute light.

'That is true, Tricotrin. That is terribly true. There is not a word of it but is fearfully, horribly, shamefully true. But see here, Tricotrin, though I am old, and poor, and but for you most like should be now dead of want, there is something I would not part with for all that gilded shame—it is this—just this: To know, all my life through, that no man ever had the right to scorn me. To know, all my life through, that they were bound to say, 'that woman is miserably poor but she cannot be bought.' There is something sweet in that — a sweetness that does not perish. Yet I had my tempters too. I was fair to look on when I was young. And I had wealth offered to me if I would have taken shame. But it was just this which saved me, Tricotrin;—not religion perhaps, and not pride of a surety; but just this;—that no man should ever feel the sex of his mother was outraged in me, that no man should ever say, "I can despise you, for have I not bought you?"'

Tricotrin's eyes grew very soft as he heard her; when her words were ended he bent low with a tender reverence to the little, old, wrinkled, white-haired peasant.

'Grand'mère, you are a good woman! If that temper were more taught to girlhood there would be little vice for which to rail against men.'

'And that is true too!' sighed Grand'mère as she went back to the fire to boil a pot of chocolate for him.

Tricotrin stood long in the moonlit doorway alone, while Mistigri swung herself in the ivy after the moths, and the quiet night lay soft and dark upon the country, while now and then the lowing of cattle, the bark of a dog, the chimes of a belfry, broke faintly on the stillness.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHEN Viva awoke in the morning with the birds, it was, for the first time in her life, with a certain dull pain at her heart, with a certain dreamy sense of some loss and some sorrow. She sat up in her little bed, and looked at her gold toys where they stood, placed close to rejoice her waking vision, on an oak chest under her casement: and as she looked the tears swam in her eyes, her pretty white chest heaved with a quick sob. It was not altogether alone for the things; she had dreamed such dreams through her Prince Fainéant, and those dreams were all dead for ever!

Moreover her first disenchantment, her first sense of shame, were bitter to bear, and though she had cared nothing at all for her handsome young wooer she had cared very much for all he had offered her: so much so that she might have taken that desire for

change to have been love for him, as many girls do, had not her own true and strong affection for Tricotrin preserved her from the error. The homage, the flattery, the sense of her power, the belief in his submission to it, had been so delightful to her; all the native coquetry in her had so exulted in its first exercise, all the imperious vanity in her had found such charm in its victory, that Viva mourned the loss of her Faust with a poignant regret which, though only egotism, made her almost think it was tenderness. It was not: any other would have done equally well in his place, and with her fancies equally flattered, Viva would have been equally happy. But as it was, there was no one to substitute for him, and therefore she gave him a generous regret that would have looked very much like love to him had he seen her half risen on the little white couch, with her hair falling over her bare shoulders, with her great eyes swimming, and her lovely mouth swollen with tears.

But Viva was brave and was true to her word. She had many faults and more foibles, but she had the one supreme excellence of unerring courage. She had said she would give all her bagatelles up; and she did not once waver. When she had flung the cold bright water over her face and form, and dressed, and knelt awhile under the wooden cross which Grand'mère had placed in her chamber, Viva was nerved to sacrifice: and in one sense she hated

the things,—they had wounded her pride,—she had no wish to keep them.

Yet her tears fell on them one by one as she looked at each for the last time of all, and put them by, one by one, in a basket. Though she did not know it she had cause to weep,—it was her first faith broken, her first illusion faded, her first trust betrayed. Youth is wise in its prescience when it recoils from betrayal as the deadliest thing that awaits it in life.

When they were all placed in their basket, Viva looked at her face in her own tiny mirror: 'I promised him I would not have one regret,' she thought; and she knew her face looked very tell-tale of regret indeed.

The child was frank and honest as the day: she had not learned yet even to dream of concealing what she felt. But she was courageous and she was proud; above all she was resolute not to give pain to Tricotrin. And she dashed her tears away, and leant out into the fresh morning air, and tried to sing one of her river-songs with her old gaiety; then ran swiftly down the stairs, and placed the jewels in his hands where he stood smoking, and rushed away without a word into the sunlight. Those pretty bijoux!—and it was not those alone for whom she sorrowed, it was for all the dreams that were gone with them!

Tricotrin did not seek to follow her; he com-

prehended her wish for solitude; he stood looking at the toys with a curious conflict of emotions on his face. If he had obeyed his impulse he could have crushed them all into atoms beneath his heel.

'Pretty things with which to chaffer and barter away a life!' he said in his teeth, as he folded them aside in a packet and addressed it to the young man's name. Then with it thrust into his pocket he went across the fields towards Villiers.

As he went he softly took from the breast of his blouse, and touched with loving fingers, the Attavante's Dante.

'I did not think to part ever with you,' he said gently to the book as though it were a loving thing. 'But faith must be kept with the Waif; she must have her toys back; and there is no other way. Since you must go you shall go to him.'

He looked long and wistfully at the book's familiar face; then put it into his breast more tenderly than he would have done had it been a roll of banker's notes for thousands. He loved the thing; it had been his from his childhood, and had accompanied him through so many changeful years; the only relic he had kept of a long-perished life for ever lost.

But he had promised Viva the equals of her golden toys: wealth he had none: the book must go. He would have worked willingly for the jewels' worth; but that must have been slow purchase of

them, and he would not have the child mourn her playthings for an hour more than was inevitable. Three leagues brought him to Villiers; by the same route which he had traversed the day after he had first found her among the clematis. He paused at the little picturesque building that stood in English fashion beside the huge entrance-gates. A comely brown-eyed, laughing woman, with children clinging to her skirt, greeted him with delighted welcome as he appeared; it was Nicolette, who had long been Valentin's wife, and who was happy in the tender, sunny, graceful fashion with which the French peasant will so often attain happiness even in the midst of poverty: a dragon however that never visited the home of the little quondam fruit-seller.

'Is the young lord at the chateau, Nicolette?' he asked, after submitting to all the greetings of the little brunette, who loved him well as the founder of all her wedded peace by his timely counsel to the over-humble Valentin: Nicolette shook her head: the young lord had left Villiers last evening.

Tricotrin put the packet into her hands.

'Give that to his servant, Nicolette; and say nothing of who brought it.'

Nicolette's eyes grew grave and anxious a moment.

'Surely I will; and be silent as the dead. But—is it true, Tricotrin?—I heard the other day

that Milord was seen very often with the little angel at Grand'mère's?'

'It is true,' said Tricotrin, curtly. 'But he will be seen no more, I promise you.'

'That is well, I am glad you are come,' murmured Madame Valentin. 'I got a little anxious; I remembered what you told me once about those people's love. And the little one is so young, and so proud!'

Tricotrin nodded; he did not care to pursue the subject; and after a few kindly questions concerning her family and their welfare, he passed onward into the park up the wooded terraces. Nicolette knew him too well of old to ask him whither he went.

But as she turned into her cottage her face was grave, and she stood pensively before her old mother, who was sitting by the sunshiny casement, shelling peas and washing cabbages.

'Mother! I hope the pretty child will never bring woe to Tricotrin?'

The old woman cracked a pea-pod sharply.

'Viva?' she murmured. 'She owes him everything, I dare say she will break his heart some day. That is the way of them all.'

Such was the experience of her own life of eighty-and-two years!

Meanwhile Tricotrin went up towards the castle. There was a graver and more careworn thought

upon him than was usual there. There was something of impatience and of pain. He had resolved to keep faith with the young man, as the young man had chosen exile in lieu of exposure; and the former served Viva by far the best, insomuch as it kept the offence against her untold, and a girl's name is like a peach;—the down once brushed off, the fruit bears the trace of the rough handling for ever. Still, though he did not go to expose Estmere's son, it was Estmere whom he sought. He had heard yester-eve, as he had come through the country, that the noble had returned for a brief time to his pleasure-home.

He soon found himself in the gardens; the same gardens where he had spoken to Valentin amongst the azaleas. Years made no difference here; the turf only grew smoother, the flowers only more abundant, under the culture that wealth commanded. All the old beauty that the place had known in the days of the Regency bloomed afresh over it as though it had never been destroyed under the neglect of long years and an impoverished race: it had looked to Viva like some marvellous chateau of the Rénaissance times, fit for the splendid prison of the Sleeping Beauty, and for once her extravagant fancy had not led her astray.

Tricotrin knew that the English Earl rose early; and that most early mornings brought him out on the terraces of Villiers before the more indolent

throng of his guests had awakened. Though the name of the foreign race never by choice passed his lips, there was little concerning their life with which he was not acquainted, down even to the trifling details of their daily habits; and here his knowledge proved aright. Whilst still far off himself among the labyrinths of roses, he saw Estmere; walking slowly before the chateau with one companion only, and followed step for step by a great Russian boarhound.

The sun shone full upon the terrace, and on the tall form of the English nobleman; it looked taller still beside the diminutive person of the foreign statesman with him, and his face had the same beauty, scarcely aged since Tricotrin had looked in on him in his banqueting-room: the fair, delicate, grave beauty of one in whom pride was stronger than passion, and the intellect dominated the senses. The face was calm, cold, full of thought; the lines of the mouth were musing and somewhat disdainful, the eyes were blue, luminous, penetrating, revealing nothing, save when, in very rare moments of pleasure, a smile would gleam in them that women valued as they did not value the less hardly-won smiles of men more easily amused and more rapidly interested.

There was no smile in them now, but a displeased surprise as they glanced over the gardens and saw an intruder there.

'A man in a blouse!—a man with a monkey! Come to beg, I presume,' murmured the Earl. 'What can the gardeners and the park-rangers be about?'

His companion looked where he looked: but with a different expression.

'Why! that is Tricotrin!'

'And who is Tricotrin?'

'A folio could not tell!'

'I imagine one word could!'

'And what word would that be?'

'A scamp,' said Estmere, with his eyes still on the man with a monkey.

'Oh, no!' cried the foreigner, eagerly. 'You mistake; indeed you mistake. Tricotrin has the most marvellous talents, the most marvellous influence over the populace; he might be anything if he chose, and there is nothing he does not manage to know. He is a character;—quite a character!'

'I do not like characters,' said Estmere, chillily. 'A man has lost the fact before he acquires the title. "A great character," says the world when it means, "a great rogue!"'

'Tricotrin is no rogue—'

'No? Then if he be your visitor allow me to leave you to him.'

'He is not my visitor,' muttered the French statesman hurriedly, embarrassed between his desire to speak to the new-comer, and his fear of his host's

courtly contempt. 'I am not aware how he comes in your gardens, but indeed—Tricotrin is so well with the people, it does not do to incense him. No government dare touch him, though any other man would be proscribed for one half what he utters. He is a rank democrat; but—'

'A democrat!' echoed the cold musical tones of the owner of Villiers. 'With advanced views of "Progress" that shall turn the lowest strata topmost! With too noble a spirit to be restricted by the petty laws of Meum and Tuum! With a passion for liberty conceived in a wine-shop and nursed at the galleys! Thanks, I have no desire for his presence in my grounds. Since you know him, will you be kind enough to order him away?'

Tricotrin had drawn near enough by this time to hear the concluding phrases, but he had looked so earnestly at Estmere, and as he had looked, had been so thoroughly occupied with his own thoughts, that he had not noted the first words: at the last all his archest laughter gleamed radiantly in his eyes:

'Order me away? Ah, M. Pharamonde, what do you say to that? You know I could bring all my Loirais back with me to sack this dainty place!'

'Threats?' said Estmere, with cold disdain;—and he glanced at his French friend to see how the insolent challenge was received and resented.

Pharamonde, a minister of timorous policies,—who caressed the people because he feared them, as the hand of a coward caresses the head of a mastiff,—tried to laugh off the embarrassment he felt between his desire to propitiate the Bohemian, and yet hold his dignity with the Noble. But the jest he essayed fell dead. Tricotrin stood unmoved, in merciless amusement at his difficulty; Estmere turned away in a scorn he scarcely endeavoured to conceal.

'I will leave you, Pharamonde, to converse with —your friend!'

The minister winced and reddened; Tricotrin laughed outright.

'Nay, I claim no friendship with M. Pharamonde; and my business lies with you, my Lord Earl.'

Estmere surveyed him with the amazement of a great man whom no familiarities ever approach.

'I never have business with strangers; and,—by what right do you intrude in my gardens?'

'Bah! The right that I found a door ready open: do you statesmen want any other excuse for intruding into a neighbour's empire? Only you go further;—you rifle his treasuries, I do not touch even one of your rosebuds. A stranger, am I? Ah! Well, M. Pharamonde here will vouch for me;—vouch at any rate that I did not come out of the galleys; and that I will not dance the carmagnole yet on your terraces.'

Estmere's eyes rested on him as he spoke; eyes well used to read character keenly, well able to penetrate through the surface of all things. He had never seen any one like the man who thus addressed him,—a man of the people, in a blue blouse, and with a little black monkey peering over his shoulder, yet a man with the head of a sun-god and the rich ringing voice of a gentleman.

'Come, M. Pharamonde!' cried Tricotrin. 'Stand my sponsor for once! Assure Lord Estmere that the impertinence in me of being original has not as yet led to the addendum of being criminal; which he appears to consider is its natural and due development!'

'Indeed, Tricotrin,' murmured the minister, not knowing very well how to reply. 'You mistake entirely; I was about to assure my lord how invariably for good is the singular influence you exercise over the people.'

'I doubt if "my lord" will believe that; he has no love for democrats. Still it may suffice to make him do what I want—buy this book of me.'

Estmere—who had paused in some interest, and in more distaste, at the interruption which aroused sufficient surprise in him to make him remain a listener and a spectator of the unknown intruder on his privacy—glanced at the volume, and thought to himself that the eccentricity of this new comer was little short of insanity. Yet that mere glance told

him, a famed connoisseur in such matters, that the book was a most rare one: was it possible that the man had stolen it?

Tricotrin, with his swift intuition, read the doubt of him; and the humorous laughter glittered more archly and ironically in his eyes.

'Look at it, monseigneur!' he said, holding it out. 'No thief's hands have soiled it. Will you put it among your treasures at Beaumanoir?'

'Beaumanoir!'

Lord Estmere echoed in some involuntary surprise the name of his old native home: what could a French wanderer, he wondered, know of it and its world-famous library? But he took the volume and turned its leaves over in all a connoisseur's interest.

'A genuine Attavante!' he murmured, 'and in perfect condition.'

The minister beside him glanced over his arm at it:

'The Attavante Dante!' he cried. 'Why! Tricotrin, that is the very book for which you refused untold gold from the Cardinal last year at Nice?'

Tricotrin shrugged his shoulders.

'I did not want the money then: I do now. Besides, I have no affection for Monsingnori. I have brought Earl Eustace the book because he has a love of such things, a love more genuine than the

mere collector's pride of accumulation and possession.'

Estmere's eyes were lifted to look at him for one moment as the words 'Earl Eustace' were spoken:—to be called by his baptismal name! No such familiarity had ever been taken in his life with him. He said nothing however; but continued his examination of the literary treasure.

'You need the money?' he asked at length.

Tricotrin gave a gesture of half haughty impatience.

'My lord, all the questions *you* need concern yourself with are,—what is it worth, and whether you wish for it. There are hundreds in Europe who will buy it if you do not.'

Estmere was silent: he felt himself to be justly rebuked, and proud as he was, he liked the rebuke, and liked the speaker better for it.

'It is a perfect copy,' he said, turning to the French minister. 'What did the Cardinal you allude to offer for it?'

His friend named the price.

'Too much by one half,' struck in Tricotrin. 'I have no patience for those fools' prices;—after all, what is an "antique?" Only something grown mouldy by age and disuse! And with a book, like a man, the lack of pedigree matters nothing, if the pages within be writ fair.'

The sentiment was too democratic for the person

it was addressed to, and he made no reply: but with another look at the miniatures of the Dante he determined to give it a home in his library.

'If you will accept the Cardinal's very fair price, the book is mine,' he said. 'It is fully worth it as bibliopoles' treasures go.'

Tricotrin bowed his head: and Estmere thought as he saw the gesture, 'that man bows like my equal;—and with infinite grace. What can he possibly be? Surely no common vagrant.'

He paused a moment, strongly inclined to enter into more converse with this stranger, whose frankness and whose singularity attracted him; but old habit, natural reserve, and an aristocrat's detestation of democracy and its professors, made him resist the impulse: he gave the Attavante back to Tricotrin.

'I will send you the gold, and be good enough to return the book to the bearer. If you will go within, my people will give you some breakfast.'

Tricotrin's forehead flushed red.

'I remain here,' he said, curtly. 'And I do not require your hospitality.'

'Ah, Estmere! that man is so proud,' whispered Pharamonde. Estmere took no notice, but passed into the house, through an open window; he half repented that he had bought the Attavante; still,—the man must have wanted the money, or he would not have offered it for sale; and it was of genuine worth and authenticity.

Tricotrin paced up and down the terrace with restless uneven steps: the French statesman approached him.

'Tricotrin! if you needed gold why not have asked me?'

Tricotrin's eagle glance flashed on him.

'Gifts to men of my station are bribes: and, if they are not that, they are alms. I take neither!'

'But a wage for a fair service? Look you, what service you might render the government—'

'By making the flocks submit still more passively to be shorn, and the droves to be driven out still more docilely to perish in the war-tracks? It is not my work.'

'Nay, nay!' murmured the facile and courteous statesman. 'Not that. But by the use of your influence over the people at the elections—'

'I never interfere in such matters.'

'Why so?'

'Why? Because if I did I must show them the naked truth as I see it, and if the nations once saw that of those whom they call rulers, the world would be red with a sea of blood. For the people are long submissive as the camel; but when once they rise they are tigers. We, who know that, tremble to bid them to throw off their overladen burdens, lest the patient beast that has knelt in pain for so long should rise, transformed, with talon and fang to destroy both his kind and his drivers.'

He spoke with passion, with more bitterness too than was common with him: Pharamonde looked at him almost with fear, and was silent:

'That is not the usual hesitation of the demagogue,' he thought.

'I am no demagogue,' said Tricotrin, with rapid divination of his musing. 'Do you know what the demagogue is? The man who rouses the camels into impatience of their burdens that he may rifle the baggage as it falls to the ground in the strife.'

'Milord sends you this,' interrupted a servant, approaching him with the gold for the Dante.

Tricotrin took it, and gave the book in its stead, without a word: Pharamonde eyed him curiously, as though he were some natural phenomenon.

'You are a strange man! When you might pick up wealth by the handsful!'

'I do not care to soil my fingers,' he answered, curtly, as he made a gesture of adieu to the statesman, and went down the steps of the terrace. He had not been wholly at ease in the interview: it had galled him, and caused him a certain pain. The Waif's pretty toys were purchased, like many another luxury, at the price of a pang to a human heart. He loved the book well: also in one sense he loved the man to whom he had bartered it.

Pharamonde went within and joined his host, who was standing in the library of the château, turning over the leaves of his purchase.

'You do not understand Tricotrin,' said the French Minister. 'He is as proud, in his own fashion, as you can be in yours. Charity, patronage, hospitality even, if it be such as he cannot return,—pshaw! Tricotrin will suffer them no more than he would suffer the lash.'

'Well—a good spirit that. But who is he?'

'Tricotrin!'

'That is not a name?'

'It is his name; and no name since Mirabeau's has had more charm for the people. He could have been a second Mirabeau had he cared to be so.'

'And why did he not care?'

Pharamonde shrugged his shoulders.

'He loves his liberty; and he has no ambition. I have seen much of him at divers times; he has no love for me, but he is a curious study. He is a ripe scholar; he has marvellous eloquence when he will; he has the genius of command in him if ever he choose to exert it; and—he never troubles himself to do anything except to play at a peasant's bridal feast, or a village wine-shop's carousal, with the talent of Paganini and Bamboche!'

'A bohemian!' said Estmere, with a slight gesture of comprehension and disgust. 'He is not the first by many who has wasted a genius that might have ruled an empire, in reigning over a pot-house revelry!'

The conclusion was unjust, but it pleased

Pharamonde: it was a little revenge for the rebuff that the bohemian had given him.

'A scholar, you say?' continued Estmere, still looking over the Dante. 'Pray what were his antecedents then: he must have had other domiciles than wine-shops?'

'Ah, that I cannot tell you,' said the statesman very truthfully. 'I do not think there is a living soul that knows where he came from. Antecedents! he would not acknowledge anything so aristocratic. On my honour I think he sprang out of the earth!'

'Full-armed, I suppose!' said Estmere, with a satirical inflection in his voice that his guest did not relish. Pharamonde felt that his English friend had a polite contempt for both him and his bohemian.

He changed the subject, and Estmere put the book aside in a cabinet.

It was late in the evening when Tricotrín returned to his Waif: he had been to Blois, which was many miles distant, and a full day's journey from the little lonely vineyard-shrouded village which lay hidden under greenery by the water-side, like a lark's nest amongst the grasses. Viva was sitting on the stone stile of the doorway, with the white cat Bébé in her lap: the sun had gone down, but there was just ruddy glow enough left to warm to rich hues her pretty drooped head, and the soft grace of her shoulders and bosom, as she sat with her arms crossed, enclosing Bébé in their clasp, while the quick

heave of her chest was shown by the open square-cut bodice she wore:—a dress half like a peasant's, half like an old picture, in which the provincialism of Grand'mère and the fantastic fancy of the child had been blended.

Something in the shadows, or something in the attitude, made her look less childlike and more womanlike to Tricotrin than she had ever done. Perhaps it might be because one man had sought her as woman, not child, that the fact that her childhood had well nigh passed away, struck on him for the first time.

He paused a moment unseen, looking at her; and for the first time also a dreaming conjecture came over him: he thrust it away with half a smile, half a sigh:

'Pshaw!' he thought to himself. 'She is a child to me, though not to that youth. What should I get but the fate of Bruno?'

He looked no longer, but softly approached her and dropped the packet he bore into her lap: she started to her feet, upsetting the luckless Bébé, and gave a cry of delight. As the string of the packet had broken, into her hands had fallen the facsimiles of her lost bijoux, with something still costlier and prettier added; golden toys, that glittered with rainbow hues in their gems, under the flame-like reflections that still came from the west.

She threw her arm about him and thanked him

with all the vivacity and the frank abandonment of her nature :—and he was repaid for the sale of the Attavante.

'Will they do as well, little one?' he asked her.

'As well! A thousand times better! For you know how dearly I love *you*, and—' she hesitated a moment, then leaned a little nearer to him, with the most charming confidential and penitent grace in the world, 'it was very wrong, perhaps, for he meant to be kind, and he begged me so often to love him,—but I never could care for him as much as I wished to do. He was only a Prince Fainéant after all!'

Tricotrin's face lightened with a brighter gleam than it had worn all the day through.

'A Prince Fainéant,—true! And his offered crowns would have been only of brass, and very heavy on your brows, if you had worn them.'

'Ah?' Viva looked up into his face with a touch of awe on her; she had some vague impression that some evil of unknown magnitude would have befallen her if she had been enticed into following her fairy-prince. 'But—Paris would have been real, would it not? I do so want to see Paris!'

'The heaven and the hell of women? Oh child, you are better here.'

'But just to see it?' pleaded Viva. 'Just to see those wonderful summer nights he told me of, with the streets like streams of living fire, and the avenues all glittering with lights like a million of

stars among a million leaves! As I grow older, you will take me with you, will you not?—take me with you everywhere?'

A radiance shone in his eyes as he looked down on her and laughed.

'We will see;—when you are older!'

The evening seemed very fair to him, as he played her favourite airs of Lulli and of Grétry in the moonlit porch, and the girl listened in thoughtful pleasure, thrown down in her young careless grace at his feet.

The Prince Fainéant was well nigh forgotten; and Tricotrin was repaid for the loss of his long-treasured Dante.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE next day the vintage began.

All through the grape-country there were mirth and work, and rejoicing and abundance. Grapes on the laden trailing bough; grapes on the heavy oxen-waggons; grapes piled high in the winepresses under the shade; grapes on the braided hair of girls where they laughed in the sun; grapes in the rosy hands of children where they lay asleep, flushed with their feasting; grapes everywhere in lavish plenty, for the summer had been splendid, and the harvest was fine in due sequence.

Tricotrin loved the vintage-month.

It had been vintage time when he had first come amongst his Loirois, and laughed and danced, and been crowned like a young Bacchus in the years of his boyhood. It was rarely that he was away from central France in the wine season; and the good people

averred that in his presence the harvest was always more profuse than it was in the autumn he was absent. It was without doubt more gay; for they never worked so joyously, they never danced so heedlessly, as when he was amongst them. He would work himself, giving the wage that he gained to the oldest woman in the district, or to some fatherless child. He would make the young girls laugh from sunrise to sunset; he would lighten the oxen's toil by bringing them great cool juicy leaves and grasses where they stood in the hot noonday. He would play to the young of the villages half through the sultry starry nights, while their feet flew to the most intoxicating dance melodies that ever were heard even under the skies of France. And of all those whose labour he thus lightened with jest and with raillery, and with a sunny mellow laughter, fit for the lips of a Dionysus, there was not one who was happier than he.

From the first years of her remembrance his Waif had learned to look for him at the vine-gatherings. Wherever he might wander during the three other seasons—and he wandered very far and wide with ceaseless, restless pleasure in the mere sense of motion—he was almost certain to enter France at the late summer-time, to be amongst the pleasant voices and the brown bright eyes of the people he loved best.

The vintage had long been the child's festal

month, for there were none for leagues around her but welcomed the stray thing whose history they all knew, and who was hallowed and endeared to them by the fact that he had taken pity on her destitution and abandonment. Among the peasantry the singularity and mystery of the child's appearance in their presence had something of the same enchantment that it possessed for her herself. Nothing was too wonderful for them to believe of any creature whom Tricotrin protected; and Viva's own views, as to her elfin-origin, were not so wholly unshared by the country-people as might be imagined by those who are ignorant of how deeply struck are the roots of superstition in the primitive places of all countries.

She, unconsciously, had fostered the impression by her dainty tastes, her proud ways, her haughty young waywardness, to which they cheerfully submitted because she belonged to Tricotrin; and Viva held an undisputed sovereignty over the whole riverside, in which her fair face was ever seen. And now, in the gladness and the gaiety of the vintage, she swiftly forgot the love passages of her fairy-prince. Her heart had not been touched, and her admiration had not been excited. She now possessed as pretty things as those he had given her, and she enjoyed them more because she enjoyed them openly, without the latent fear that she was doing wrong, which had poisoned her pleasure in the young

lord's gifts. Beyond a certain gratification, unconscious, but born of the innate coquetry in her, that she had been the object of such an episode, little remained with her of the poison he had sown—nothing sufficient to spoil her enjoyment of the harvest-time, save that she would now and then think that to ride on a bullock-drawn waggon, or to dance on the top of a wine-press, was hardly amusement regal enough for such a princess as he had told her that she was. But the amusement was too attractive to be relinquished for that consideration, and she consoled herself by thinking that, at any rate, he was not there to see.

Tricotrin, moreover, was with her; and Viva in his presence was always her brightest, her gentlest, her best; she felt 'good' with him, as she never did with any other. He knew the way to the hidden gold in this capricious and thoughtless nature;—a way which others continually missed.

Vineyards lay all about the old place where she dwelt, on either side of the flashing river, and stretching far away into the interior, broken here and there by path or road, by wood or hamlet, but extending widely round on every side, and rich, at this period of the vines' life, with the fruit all ripened and glowing to purple or to gold. Viva wandered in them in joyful idleness all the livelong day; and he, himself, asked no better life than this out-of-door life, stripping the laden branches, laughing

with the handsome brown women, aiding the aged who could not work for themselves, and taking the oxen homeward through the cool shaded bridle-lanes.

'The possessor of an Attavante's Dante should not be a labourer in a vineyard,' said a slow melodious voice behind him one morning as he worked; —worked in earnest, for he wanted a day's wage to make up the loss of a poor old woman, whose hen-house had been pillaged of all its fowls in the night.

Tricotrin looked up, and saw the purchaser of the Dante, who, riding by a narrow pathway through the vines, had checked his horse for an instant.

'Good day, Lord Estmere. Why not?' he returned. 'Another poet, Virgil, loved the fields right well. Besides, "to be a husbandman is but to retreat from the city—from the world as it is man's, to the world as it is God's."'

Estmere regarded him earnestly; here was a French bohemian quoting Cowley in the purest English.

'You are a scholar and a poet yourself?' he asked.

Tricotrin laughed:

> '"Neimand will ein Schuster seyn
> Jedermann ein Dichter."

Though it may well be doubted if he who mends

other people's shoes, is not of more use than he who only tinkers his own sonnets!'

Estmere's meditative eyes dwelt on those that the rich Aristophanic humours, the brilliant Swift-like irony, the Burgundian Piron-wit of many nationalities, seemed to lighten to their Hudibrastic laughter.

'You speak three languages with equal purity of accent. Of what country are you, may I ask?' he said at length.

'I will speak twenty if you like; and I am a Cosmopolitan.'

'A "citizen of the world" then. You have travelled greatly?'

'I have lived all over the world,' said Tricotrin with a shrug of his shoulders; 'it is not big enough to make that much of a boast.'

'And the result of all these experiences is to bring you back to a vine-field?'

'Well,—Diocletian went back to a cabbage-garden. A vine-field is more poetic.'

'But Diocletian had been sated with empire?'

'Well; and if the result of empire and satiety be to conclude that there is nothing equal to cabbages for comfort, is it not better to take the vegetables at first and eschew the travail altogether?'

Estmere smiled: despite his prejudice against the class of men to which he believed Tricotrin to belong, and his dislike to anything that approached

to lawlessness or democratic sentiment, he could not help feeling a certain attraction towards the speaker. His intuition told him that he addressed no common man, though he spoke with one working like a day-labourer among the vines.

'I imagine,' he answered, 'that Diocletian's was an affectation of philosophy and renunciation rather than a genuine tribute to the charms of cabbages. Moreover, talent is rare; it is always a pity that it should be wasted while its possessor does hand-work that any boor could equally well execute.'

'Pardie! May not talent be equally wasted in organizing wholesale murders by shot or steel, or wholesale political chicaneries of the people; yet those are what you statesmen call "glory" and "state craft." Zoroaster says that he who sows the ground with diligence acquires more religious merit than he who repeats ten thousand prayers: and I believe he is right.'

'That may be; yet the sowing is only for the body, the meditations may well enrich the mind, or, as men call it, the soul.'

'That is true. And a great thought makes the world richer than ten shipments of gold. But, believe me, Earl Eustace, because the hands labour, it does not follow that the soul lies barren of tillage. Goethe knew what beautiful things the vines can utter; he need not have heard those less in working, than in strolling, amongst them.'

Estmere looked at him curiously, and his voice had a certain haughty cadence in it that it had lost in exchanging these phrases.

'Why do you change my title thus?' he asked. 'It is a singular mode of address.'

Tricotrin's eyes laughed with the same ironic mirth that had been in them before, when he had heard himself arraigned for entering the rose-gardens.

'Why so? You are Earl Eustace, are you not? There have been Earl John, and Earl Philip, and Earl Louis, and many more—the Blind Earl, and the Mad Earl, and the Child-Earl, and some others, in the chronicles of your race. Why should not you be distinctive, too, by your name?'

'You know much of my family?' asked Estmere, in more surprise than he chose to display.

'Oh-hè!' said Tricotrin, carelessly. 'I know most things; and the Estmeres are not lights hidden under a bushel. Your people have never loved obscurity, beau Sire.'

'We have done our best not to deserve it,' said Estmere, coldly. 'Good-day to you.'

He rode onward through the vine-fields, astonished, perplexed, a little annoyed; he did not feel pleasured by the familiarity of this bohemian, and the off-hand allusions to his great race went against all his taste, his pride, and his caste; and yet,—the man interested him!

And interest was a thing to which he was very rarely stirred.

Tricotrin looked after him with a shade of thoughtfulness on his features; then went on again with his work, laughing with his next neighbour, a noble Murillo-like woman, with all the rich old Gaulois blood in her clear olive cheek.

'That is a very singular person—your friend, what is he called, "Tricotrin"?' said Estmere that evening, to the French statesman Pharamonde. 'A most striking-looking man,—the head of a poet, a marvellous head for beauty and power. What a wasted and misguided life must his be that he should be content thus with an errant bohemianism!'

'Humph!' said Pharamonde, who did not forgive the wanderer being accredited to him as his friend. 'I am not sure he is not the wisest man in his generation: I am quite sure he is the happiest.'

'Is it possible for a wise man to be happy?' said Estmere, with a smile that was not ironical, but weary.

Some days later, he and some of his guests rode by the same route through the vineyards below Villiers, at evensong. It was the close of the vintage, and they reined up and drew aside, some four leagues from the château, where they encountered the procession of Bacchus borne along, in its relic of pagan worship, with all the old accustomed honours.

Patriarchal as the days of Palestine, classic as the worship of Dionysus, with a thousand memories of old Gaul, and a thousand traces of the cultus of Greece and of Rome, the crowning feast of the grape harvest came. The meek-eyed oxen, with their horns wreathed with flowers, dragged waggons that were laden high with the yellow and violet clusters, while before them, around them, behind them, crowded the laughing throng of girls and youths and little children, reeling under the burden of the fruit, shouting under their chaplets of late roses. It was like some Merovingian or Carlovingian triumph, when the kings of Gaul celebrated harvest, or victory in war; and the pageant moved to the divinest vintage-ode that was ever breathed over the fruitful fields of France:—music mellow as wine, full of intoxicating joy that the people caught in echoing chorus, and deepening now and then into the grandeur of a Te Deum, as though in thanksgiving to God who made the earth increase.

Involuntarily the riders paused, and listened spell-bound to that harvest-chant;—it was played by Tricotrin where he walked in front of the oxen; in front of the foremost waggon.

On that waggon all eyes turned, and in its decoration all the choice blossoms and the gayest ribbons had been employed. For, throned high among the grapes, with a green crown of vine leaves on her head, and half-covered with autumn

flowers, sat Viva;—gloriously happy and triumphant; the universally elected queen of beauty, and of the grape festival; all her love of light and mirth and music and homage gratified; all her childlike adoration of display fed to its utmost will.

Estmere looked at her as the bullocks, nodding their heads under their garlands, drew her slowly past him.

'What an exquisite face!' he murmured. 'That child cannot belong to the peasantry.'

She heard and looked down from beneath her vine-canopy, a deep delight beaming in her eyes, an exultant pride laughing on her lips: then a blush of shame replaced the glow of ecstasy, her head drooped as if her vine-crown were a circlet of lead, her pleasure in the vintage feast was gone;—she had been seen by a great man amongst the People!

'More poison for her from them!' muttered Tricotrin, as he saw and heard: and for an instant there were discord and a break in the delicious melody he gave the villagers. In another instant the music broke forth again in all its silvery sweetness: but to Viva's heart the harmony was not so easily restored.

Estmere rode on, unconscious of the evil that he had done; and the procession moved away along the line of the river, while the glad tumult of the multitude echoed down the evening air.

'What an exquisite face,' thought the Earl once more; and he sighed,—a short quick sigh. The fairness of women had been poisoned to him.

'Will you not dance, Viva?' Tricotrin asked her that night, when the vintage-ball followed the vintage-feast on the green of her little hamlet, and he played for the dancers in airs so bewitching that the good white-haired old priest could scarcely refrain from joining in the rounds and measures.

'No!' said Viva, shyly and petulantly, with the colour hot on her cheeks. She usually danced with all the grace of a fairy, and the abandonment of French blood;—would have so danced all night, all by herself, if she had had the chance;—but this evening the young boatmen and vintagers vainly pressed and entreated her. She was obstinate: she would not join them; nothing could make her; and the vine-garland pressed almost as heavily on her brows as real crowns on those of real sovereigns. Tricotrin looked at her earnestly several times; but he let her do as she would, and did not seek to persuade her.

When the innocent mirth of the young and the old—of the lovers who danced on the star-lighted turf, and the children who played at their mother's knees, and the aged who looked on amused and recalling the days of their youth—was over, and the planets were growing large in the blue sultry skies,

he approached her where she sat listlessly, under one of the lime trees.

'Viva—what ailed you to-night?'

She lifted her head, and he saw tears swimming full in her eyes.

'He said I could not be of the peasantry! And I am *not!*—yet I live with them as if I were, and I have no name and no heritage!'

The words were passionately uttered; as he heard them a look of pain went over his face.

'I have done all I could that you should not feel your loss; but that "all" is little,' he murmured. 'Why should a stranger's idle speech move you thus?'

'Because he is so great!—and I want to be great too. And he saw me riding among the villagers,—among the common people! As if I were some farm-girl, some dairy-servant!'

And Viva, a child still, though something more than childhood had begun to wake in her, pulled the beautiful grape garland off her hair, and threw it on the turf, and stamped on it with her feet, as though it were the badge of ignominy, servitude, and opprobrium.

Tricotrin caught her arm.

'Viva, Viva, for shame! The people whom you scorn, strove their best to pleasure you, and the peasant girls you despise yielded place to you without jealousy, and wove you that wreath in simple

love and good will;—and at the first light word from a great man you turn against them, and are ungrateful thus?'

The grave gentle rebuke sunk into the child's heart; her chest heaved with a sob, her face grew crimson with shame.

'I know! I know it is wicked; but I cannot help it. He thought I was beautiful; he said so; and he saw me among all the peasantry, he can think me no better than they!'

'If you be as good as they, as single-hearted, as patient, as brave under burdens—you will be nobler than you promise to be now!'

There was the first scorn and the first severity he had ever shown to her in the words.

Viva's fiery spirit flashed up under the lash.

'They are good as the mules are good! Just so stupid, just so plodding; only content because they know of nothing better!' she cried, vehemently. 'I cannot be of them—I know I cannot,—and that English lord said so. And if he meets me again he will never speak to me because he will always remember me on that grape-waggon!'

And her tears fell in swift tempestuous emotion, as though foreboding some hour when that memory would rise up between her and the aristocrat whose notice had spoilt all the innocent joy of her vintage-feast.

Tricotrin listened with his face growing darker and more impatient.

'You are ungrateful! Ungrateful as a woman; who can say more?' he said, bitterly. 'Why has he bewitched you? He is a cold man,—he is not even young,—he will never think twice of you!'

'But he looks so *great!*' cried Viva, unconscious or unheeding of the irritated pain in his voice. 'And he is beautiful too, like that Arthur of England you have told me the legends of, with his blue grave eyes and his air like a king's!'

Tricotrin left her side and paced to and fro the grass under the limes; he was deeply wounded, passionately angered; but he would show neither wound nor anger to her. The creature that was wholly dependent on him, whom, were it his wish, he could cast back destitute upon the world, should never hear a harsh word from him.

Viva watched him one moment, pride and rebellion still strong in her: then all the child's better nature conquered them, she sprang to him and wound her arms about him in caressing penitence.

'Oh forgive me! I was so wrong—so ungrateful. Do pardon me,—do smile at me. I care for nothing else if you love me!'

He gently unloosed her arms from him.

'I forgive; I am not angered, only regretful—for your future.'

'And why for that?'

Were there ever young eyes that saw clouds on the Future?

'Because, you know you are beautiful and have no mother; because you are proud yet are nameless; because you are amongst the peasantry and pine for a palace; because you are divinely natured in much, but have faults that may make your misery and your sin. Waif of mine! better I fear that you had died amongst the clematis!'

The words were infinitely tender and solemn in their sadness; Viva was stilled and awed by their grave sweetness.

'I know I am wicked,' she murmured at last. 'The people were so good to crown me; and you,—oh! how can I ever love you enough? But—but—was it indeed so wrong to be glad because I had beauty in that great Lord's sight?'

'Oh! true to your sex!' cried Tricotrin, impatiently. 'The dearest praise comes from the highest lips! Estmere will never think once of you; why waste thought on him?'

'I cannot help it,' pleaded Viva, musingly. 'He looks like a monarch; I do not know what it is, but his face has a charm:—'

'Because you know him to be a great man!—if he were a vintager, Viva, you would never glance twice at him! I would have never believed, till I heard you to-night, that the first vain word that a stranger could speak would turn you against all the friends

of your childhood. His one light compliment was ill worth your poor vine-garland. Though your future were to crown you as it crowned the slave Catherine, and the Creole Joséphine, you would look wearily back from your state as an empress to the time when that village chaplet was worn on your innocent forehead!'

Viva's tears fell fast, in remorse and in penitence now.

'My beautiful vine-crown! I was cruel — I was mad,' she murmured, brokenly, as she lifted up the wreath in contrite tenderness, and touched fondly and regretfully the drooped tendrils, the faded leaves, the crushed freshness of the fair green diadem.

Tricotrin smiled mournfully:

'Yes, you were mad as those ever are who yield to the tempters of vanity and ambition. Your remorse can avail nothing. You cannot mend what you have destroyed, or recall what you have crushed. The bloom will not come back to your grape-garland, nor your childhood come back to you!'

Viva lifted her heavy eyes to him; lustreless and brimming still with tears, yet sweeter in their grief than in their radiance.

'Ah, I hate myself!' she whispered. 'I scorn myself more than you can ever scorn me! I am so happy, and you are so good, and all I do is to repay you with wicked words.'

He passed his hand gently over her brow:

'Say no more! All my fear is, your future. The world will not forgive so easily as I. And now—talk no longer, little one. Good night!'

And he left her, and though the day had been long both in mirth and in labour, walked away into the dusky midnight rapidly and alone.

CHAPTER XV.

' IVA, will you come to Paris?'

He spoke very quietly behind her the next morning where she stood feeding Roi Doré and all his feathered serail.

All the barley dropped down in a heap to the hens and chickens:

'To Paris!'—the ecstasy of her face said the rest.

He smiled, a little sadly.

'Well, for a few days. The good woman Blaze Mévert goes up to see her son in hospital; you can go too if Grand'mère can spare you. Ask her!'

The child flew off on her errand: Tricotrin looked after her with a musing doubt in his eyes.

'It may be for the best,' he thought, 'here she will only dwell on the boy's memory. There,—well! God knows what will happen. It will be a

present pleasure at least for her; and a week can do her no harm.'

The future was a thing with which he had never burdened himself: he concerned himself with the present. If the fruit in his hand were rich and sweet he never troubled himself with fears as to whether next year's orchards would bring equal blossom. It was only now for the first time as the Waif grew nearer womanhood that the question grew perplexing to him:—for it was the question now, not of his future, but of hers. The future of a girl, nameless, motherless, but for him homeless, proud as though she were the daughter of kings, and passionate in her desire for greatness! What could its portion be except the darkness of disappointed desire, or the false brilliancy of evil attainment? That either should become, hereafter, the share of the creature that he loved and sheltered was a cruel thought to him: yet he could not see how to avert both.

Whilst she had been happy in this country-life, whilst she had been a child to find her pleasures in a play amongst new-mown hay; in a sail in a cumbrous barge, in a gift of grapes from the vine, or of a fairy-story from a pedlar's wallet, to make her happy had been very easy. Even now, if she had clung by preference to the freshness, simplicity, and freedom of rural life; if like himself all her sympathies and attachments had been amongst the

people; if she had been satisfied with the warm and loyal liking of the peasantry who had been about her from her infancy, and—without her vain desire for alien things, for worlds which she had never entered—had found content in her own heart, and in his care of her, it would have been possible to have carried into her future years the sunshine he had shed on her early ones. But he knew well that an unfulfilled aspiration, a strangled ambition, an ever-struggling, ever-repressed longing, are as poison to the soul in which their stifled fire burns: he knew that, to such a woman as Viva would become, such poison is worse than death, such fire is an ever-devouring flame of hell.

Tricotrin, who had led so careless and so rich a life of laughter, meditation, indolence, labour, love, and wisdom intertwined to one harmonious whole, had never had in the whole course of that life a pain so keen, a fear so intangible, as faced him now in the future of what, on the pure instinct of pity, he had rescued and succoured without thought of the burden it might become to him in an after-time.

It was possible that some man might behold her who would be won by her beauty to lift her into that blaze of worldly power which she coveted. But he knew that it is not to the foundlings of bastardy, that love which is honour also is offered: and—even love with honour—if ever it were given to her, seemed to him a robber that would steal

from him that to which he had the natural right. A right precious to him, though for so long he had only thought of her as a pet thing like a spaniel or a bird.

He started as the old woman approached him through the yellow leaves of the autumnal gourds.

'Is it true the dear child is to go to Paris?' she asked.

Tricotrin looked down on her with compassionate kind eyes: he knew the pang that it dealt to this aged soul.

'Well, Grand'mère,' he said gently. 'Is it not best? Only for a week or two?—and a week or two will chase away this young hero from her memories. Now he is nothing to her:—but if she have nought else to think of he will gather, from absence, beauty and stature, not his own. Tell me, does not your experience of your sex suggest the truth of that?'

Grand'mère sighed, and shook her white head.

'I dare say, Tricotrin;—you know in my girlhood, among my people, if one had a dream in the head, or a pang at the heart, there was the baking, or the washing, or the beetroot-hoeing, or the grass-carrying, or the cow that was sick, or the calf that was hand-reared, always to occupy one, and thrust oneself out of the way,—see you? With the little darling—it is different of course. She has nothing to do but to dream.'

'And such dreams are the highways to sin! It would have been better,—ten thousand times better,—if she had had the beetroot-hoeing and the farm-house cares. But between us we have spoilt the child.'

'Tricotrin! She is a little born princess!'

'Born princesses without palaces ready for them are in a sorry plight. Viva is only—vain, ambitious, and thoroughly feminine. Those qualities are not confined to palaces.'

'You always jest,' murmured Grand'mère. 'But will you really take her to that terrible city?'

'That city is more terrible whilst it is seen through the mists of her unsatisfied longing. And she shall come back in a fortnight, at farthest.'

The still bright black eyes of the old woman clouded with the slow painful tears of age.

'Come back?' she echoed, as she turned away. 'Never the same, Tricotrin, never the same!'

And on her there weighed a bitter foreboding:—she had seen three fearless hopeful young lives pass from her into that furnace of Paris, never again to sit in the light of her lonely hearth.

'Never the same!' thought Tricotrin. 'She will never be the same, though she stay here for year after year. The aged will never remember that the youth which they love will escape from them,—will die out of their sight into its own all-absorbed ego.'

Meantime the Waif herself grew wild with rapture: Paris suggested to her a beatitude that Paradise entirely failed to do. All her elastic and vivacious nature was loosened to ecstatic joy, in which both her young Faust and her King Arthur were alike forgotten.

True, she was going in a manner very different from her ambition: she was going with the homely wife of the miller, whose mission was nothing more elevated than to see a sick son, a private soldier, in hospital: she was 'going like a peasant' she thought wistfully, into that great blazing whirlpool of sovereignties and splendours. But the delight of it far outbalanced the minor drawback; and moreover her love for Tricotrin was so much stronger than even her ambition as yet, that when she was with him, no want or wish remained upon her. His influence was great on her; greater because rather suggested than ever forced; and in his presence all that was nobler in her awoke, all that was baser waned.

Besides, she was but a child, a child who had seen nothing, and to whom all the earth was glorious. Paris was the golden land: once permitted entrance to it, all things seemed possible to happen to her:—even to its people finding in her the daughter of the old dead races of the throne of Gaul! To be claimed and crowned in Paris would not have been too wonderful an apotheosis to her triumphs,—as she dreamed of them.

It is said that earliest youth is so happy because its present is sufficient to it: is it not rather because the future is still an empire as yet uninherited, in whose unentered domain all glories and all ecstasies are possible?

It went to her heart, warm though wayward, to give pain to the old woman she loved; to bid adieu to the poultry and the doves, and the pigeons that plumed themselves all day long on the thatch of the shed, and knew her voice and their own names so well; to kiss the white cat for the last time, and know that for fourteen long days it must miss her when it mewed for its milk and its bread. But the joy of her departure outweighed her regret; and though she felt all that clinging to the only home she had known, which every young thing does when it first goes forth into its new and separate existence, the magnificence of the possibilities that she saw before her in that one word 'Paris,' stifled the emotion as fast as it rose. She went, with scarce a sigh, with scarce a backward glance, away from the home of her childhood. Away—for aught she knew—for ever.

The slow sail, miles down the river, in the early dawn to the landing-place nearest the town whence the diligence started. The posting-inn, with its busy noise and movement, its ponderous gilded sign swinging against the wooden grape-wreathed balcony, its chatter of many tongues. The dashing of the

cumbrous vehicle along the sunny road, with the incessant flack-crack of the leathern whips, and the jingling chimes of the galloping horses' harness-bells. The stoppages by picturesque wayside cabarets, bowered in pear trees golden with fruit, or chestnuts full of their spiked-armoured nuts, where the timbers were old as the days of crusades, and the lichens all grey from six centuries' growth.

The night's sleep in an antique town, where a cathedral that was a Kyrie Eleison in stone uprose in the midst, with the low peaked crowded roofs lying far down about its feet, as the worlds lie around the feet of God. The next day's repetition of the joys of the day past, while the varied scenes flew by like magic, and woods and streams, hamlets and convents, church-spires and river-bridges, were all left behind in the sunlight. The approach to Paris in the mellow evening-time, through the beautiful broad road of Versailles, down the stony slopes of Sèvres and Billancourt, past the noble wooded heights of St Cloud, and so into the city in its gorgeous night-beauty :—all that was tedious or irksome to others to her was one perpetual panorama of delight.

Viva was in enchantment.

In that warm, ruddy, luscious autumn, when summer heats stretched over the vintage-month, there were high festivals in the City of the World. Even as Rome before her, she, with her vast proletariate and her vast armies, lulled the hunger cry of the one

with the feast and spectacle in which she celebrated the victories of the other.

There had been war, and successful war; the blood and the treasure of the people had been poured out on the African sands, and the tricolour had been borne aloft over thousands of quivering bodies. France had conquered, and was rapturous in pride, for the vulture of Greed and the skeleton of Debt were her trophies, and they wore to her eyes the shapes of the archangels of Patriotism and Honour. There was a week-long rejoicing and ceasing from labour. The dumb brutes travailed in agony; the women went down into the depths of bestial vice to find their daily bread; the patriots and the thinkers were forced into silence in prison, or in exile; the future was pawned to the Gold-Devil, that he might gild with its happiness the present,—but the song, and the dance, and the laugh, and the trumpet, were all that were heard on the air.

In the first of those nights, when the populace was mad with delight, when the long avenues shone with a million of lights, when the red white and blue banners tossed in the golden gas-glare, when the wings of the glittering eagles glowed in the ruby torch flame, when the air was alive with wild melody, and music burst from every nook of the city, —in the first of these nights the Waif first beheld Paris.

She forgot all her woes and all her ambitions,

she cared nothing whether she came as princess or peasant, she was in a delirium of delight, a trance of magic :—this was the world ! Oh how rapturous a thing was the mere sense of living !—how endless a pageant the mere succession of years ! So the child thought, wafted into the victory-drunk flower-crowned joy of the city, and gazing over the throngs with her eyes like two stars, and her cheeks burning scarlet, and the breathless laughter on her happy parted lips.

CHAPTER XVI.

LIFE had no terrors, no darkness, no sadness, no peril in the sight of Viva; it was only one moving picture of changeless colour and endless charm. There was nothing in her of the poet's melancholy, of the visionary's instinctive sigh for woes that are old as the world, and that keep their cruel time with every pulse that beats. Paris and she were like one another,—gay, beautiful, volatile, vivacious, inconstant, ardent, glittering things, full of fond enthusiasm, yet full of fickle caprice, always willing to smile, never willing to weep, ardent in instantaneous worship, cruel from pure thoughtlessness. The city caressed the child: the child loved the city.

Her fair bright face, with its great dark radiant eyes, and the yellow hair pushed back under her little scarlet hood, drew every glance after it, in the

crowds of the theatres, in the little wooden booths of the fairs, under the trees of the public gardens, or beneath the lamps of the boulevards at evening. He was with her, she was sacred to the people : and all the flowers and flags and wreaths and toys that form the current merchandise of such festal times were rained upon her.

But that which Viva loved the best was to see the throng in a street turn by one impulse to gaze at her,—what made her pulse throb highest was to hear the men who looked noble, murmur after her, 'Is it a child or a woman ?—what a perfect face!'

The air was rife with adulation for her, but it was less dangerous than one voice whispering it in solitude; even as poisons that neutralize each other injure less than one drop poured alone. She lived with the good woman Mévert, high in a quaint old wooden house on the border-line of the Pays Latin; but she was with Tricotrin all the day, and all the long lustrous evenings. She was ecstatically happy, and he imagined her content; so she was, because wandering through the palaces, or watching the grand people in their carriages, Viva already mused, 'I have power because I have beauty. I will be great, too, some day.'

He thought her satisfied with the lot he gave her, as she laughed on her buoyant way beside him; she was only so because, without reasoning why, she felt she should ere long escape from it.

Tricotrin, for once, was blind, and believed that which he wished to believe. Living in a poor little room with the miller's wife she was happy, he believed, in the people's pleasures, in the luxuriant sense of young life, in such music, such mirth, such festal sights as he could give her by merely bringing her through streets and gardens. There had been nothing inordinate in her desires; they were gratified by such mere change of place as this. Why should she not always be happy thus? The man's own intellect, so richly stored, and his own soul, so catholic in sympathy, made him contented in the simplest form of life, so long as he had liberty, and health, and the beauties of the earth. Forgetful of the difference between a life that draws its pleasure from the mind within, and the life that needs to have them supplied by the world without, he saw no reason why she should not be happy thus also.

But Viva was dreaming a different dream. When she had been six nights in Paris, and three of them had been spent at theatres thrown open to the public in the Parisian holiday, a new and strong passion took possession of her. It was the passion for the Stage. Nothing of all she saw, save the splendid pomp in the courts of the Tuileries, charmed her like the stage.

Her vine-harvest feast that she had scorned was a million times more poetic, more picturesque, more classic, more full of peace, and mirth, and

beauty, than aught she saw on the theatres. But to the child, the artificial brilliancy, the mock sovereignties, of the drama were far more attractive; partly because they were novel, chiefly because they represented that phase of life which had a fatal charm for her, and gained that visible and public applause which seemed to her the choicest and the sweetest of rewards.

She was all in the wrong; her imagination, although so fanciful, was barbaric in its passion for show and for triumph, but her nature had been created thus, and nothing could have eradicated that one evil instinct from it. The chief thing that enchanted her with the stage was this:—she heard that actors and actresses were people whose origin was either totally obscured or confessedly very low; she saw them intoxicating a multitude, and receiving a public homage of whose real character she was wholly ignorant. She, who began to suspect that her fairy progenitors would never do very much for her, did not see why to her, also, this golden path should not open. She would glance at herself in the mirrors she passed, and would think, 'If even I had not genius, I should have beauty?' And her feminine instinct told her that the latter was the greater and more potent influence of the two.

There was one actress who especially influenced her—an actress who looked almost as young as herself on the stage, with a gay innocent face like a

cherub's, and the most graceful caprices that ever adorned the coquettish parts that she played. She was a very great actress, very famous, very full of riches, very wildly worshipped; one who ruined every fool that loved her with a laugh as light as a lark's song, and who triumphed in the height of her reckless vice as a conqueror in the altitude of his power. Of that Viva knew nothing whatsoever, but she heard the thunder of applause with which the public greeted her; she saw the crowns, the wreaths, the jewels, that were flung in profusion at her; she thought nothing on earth could be so glorious as to be this enchantress whom they called Coriolis.

Coriolis' eyes—acute, swift-seeing eyes, though so lambent and so blue with their sunny laughter—caught the look of rapt adoration on the handsome young face under its scarlet hood among the close-packed audience, and, well used as she was to homage, was amused and pleased with the child's rapture at her. She knew that its was the most sincere she could have; and she gave Viva, one night, a smile across the house that made its recipient as proud as though an empress had caressed her.

One day, the child—wandering under the boulevard trees with her old friend Mévert, in a morning when Tricotrin had not as yet joined her—was touched lightly by the long white wand of a lacquey glistening in gold.

'Come to the carriage; Madame wishes to see you,' said the servant.

Viva turned; and saw, looking out at her, the lovely cherubic head of her stage-sovereign. Viva — restlessly uneasy because Mère Mévert wore the quaint costume and white cap of her province, and she herself was dressed half like a gypsy and half like a girl of the old ages—went up to the equipage, breathless with wonder at seeing her deity in mere mortal guise, and out in the daylight. She felt giddy, and incredulous of her own fortune. Could it be that this potentate, whom all Paris adored, would prove after all Queen Titania?

Coriolis leaned over the low door of her carriage.

'Child! You are an adorer of mine, are you not? Where did you come from with your picture of a face?'

'The Loire, Madame.'

Viva, for the only time in her life, was shy; she was absorbed in gazing at the matchless tints and graces of her idol.

'Sprung out of the river?—a second Venus!' laughed Coriolis. 'Do you know what a fortune you have in your face, little one? Here, take these; you are young enough still to care for them.'

She put into Viva's hand some silvered, painted, glittering bonbon boxes, that were amongst the many purchases piled in her elegant carriage.

'Would you not like to come on the stage?' she went on, as the child tried to thank her as well as she could for her amazed entrancement. 'You have got it in your face, in your limbs, in your smile. It is a fair life enough.'

And the actress laughed. She—a lovely, soulless, sensual, airy thing, with a cherub's face and a kitten's folly, had found it so. She did not mean evil; she meant kindness in her way, in inciting the girl to follow her choice of it.

Viva flushed crimson to her temples.

'Oh, Madame! you think that I could?'

'Of course you could. Why not? With a face like yours you may have no more brains than a wooden Punch; you need act no more than a stick; they will run after you. Look! You are poor, I suppose?'

'I suppose so,' assented Viva, with a burning sense of shame, and a glance at Mère Mévert's costume.

'Of course you are; you were among the populace. Well, come to me, to-morrow, at that address, and I will see what I can do to put you in the way, and show you to some impresarie.'

'Ah, Madame!' cried the child, rapturously. 'And I shall have all that applause? I shall have just such homage as yours? I shall become like you, shall I?

'Become like me? Oh yes!' laughed the

Coriolis, but for the moment a shade of irritation clouded her gay forget-me-not eyes.

'If I thought so I would kill her where she stands.'

Viva and the actress both started at the sound of the voice near them. Tricotrin had drawn near as the last words were uttered. He put one hand on his Waif's shoulder, and with the other tossed the costly sweetmeat boxes back into the carriage. The eyes of Coriolis glittered with astonishment and wrath; she was a sovereign in her way, and a pampered one.

'Monsieur! who are you that dare—'

Tricotrin turned his flashing glance on her.

'A year ago I saw Jean Bruno—a maniac.'

And without another word he forced Viva away;—far away down under the trees of the street.

She looked up at him piteously.

'Was that wrong too?'

His mouth quivered with rage.

'My darling, my darling! not wrong in *you*. Ah, God! why cannot they let you be?'

'But you said you would rather kill me than let me grow like her? What is she?'

'Woe to those who teach you what sin means,' he muttered in his beard. 'Viva—that woman broke the heart of an honest man. Would you not rather die, in poverty and obscurity, than do that?'

Viva hung her head in silence; she knew in her own heart that she would not.

'But she is so lovely,' she murmured, 'and such an exquisite life she must lead; and—and—I do so want to be an actress!'

'What!'—he moved from her as if he were stung: he seemed to see a bottomless abyss yawn beneath the light dancing feet of the child that he loved.

'I do!' murmured Viva. 'All those brilliant nights, those beautiful dresses, those jewels that they toss her. Oh! I should be so happy on the stage!'

His face darkened with hot wrath, with bitter disappointment: he had fancied her happy because she was with him!

'I have said;—I would rather see you in your grave!' he answered her.

'Why?' asked Viva, awed but undeterred.

How could he tell her?

'I thought you were proud, Viva,' he said, bitterly. 'Fine pride! To desire to show yourself nightly for gold! to lay bare your beauty to the populace! to be one living lie from the hue on your cheek to the passions you simulate! to be a thing whose graces, and features, and limbs, and laughter, the lowest cur of the people can gaze at or enjoy if he pay a few coins to your master! Noble pride truly!'

Viva, who had never heard from him that scathing irony of word and tone, was rather terrified than convinced. Her head dropped: she kept silence.

'But that exquisite woman!' she whispered at last. '*She* is happy?'

'That exquisite woman!' he echoed, with acrid contempt. 'Happy? Oh yes! Possibly she is happy. Without soul, without pity, without honour, as mindless as any flower that blows in the breeze, but a flower that poisons all who breathe near it,—she is happy doubtless, because things without conscience or brain cannot suffer, because gold makes the paradise of such creatures as she! "Exquisite?" Pshaw! have you lived amidst nature not to be able to know what is false when you see it? The red of her lips, the flush on her cheeks, the white of her bosom, the tears and the laughter you by turns deem so divine—they are all lies! Lies like the life she has chosen to lead. Think of that woman's old age, think of her future; child though you be, cannot you feel *some* of their horror?'

He spoke with the more vehement bitterness of the things he could speak of to her, because he could not taint her young mind by all the truth of this lamia whom she took for an angel. It awed her, it frightened her; but it utterly failed to convince her. The actress, and the triumphs of the actress, had taken too deep a root into her fancy.

'Ah!' said Tricotrin, half fiercely, half tenderly, 'you prefer a painted lie to an undecked truth? That is ever your sex's choice!'

He walked on in a silence which the child did not break: she was puzzled and keenly disappointed; he was wounded and roused to hot wrath with this traitress who must needs seek to taint and allure what he cherished.

Viva took courage at last to speak, though she felt the only fear of him that she had ever known.

'But the Coriolis asked me to go and see her to-morrow,' she whispered, 'at the place on this card, in the day-time, you know. May I not even do that?'

Tricotrin stopped in his rapid stride, and looked straight in her uplifted eyes.

'Yes, Viva. Go if you choose. I coerce no one's liberty. But—I do not share your life with that wanton. If you go to Coriolis you will be dead to me.'

The child's head dropped again: she was struck with the sharpest terror her fair caressed life had ever known. He waited vainly some moments for answer: then he asked her,—

'Which do you choose?'

She lifted her face eagerly, and he saw her lashes all wet with unshed tears.

'Oh you,—you! What should I do without you?'

His face cleared like a landscape from which the sun sweeps away all the storm-mists.

'That is well,' he said, simply. 'And now,—let us go and look for some bonbons as handsome as those I threw away from you just now!'

Viva shook her head with a sigh.

'I am not a baby!' she said, impatiently, and a grave shadow was over her face, that no pageant of the streets, no passage of the troops, no Polinchinelle chattering his fun, no Dulcamara vaunting his wares at beat of drum, nothing of all the frolic and the glitter of the holiday-noon availed to chase away. In the audaciousness of her supreme ignorance she disbelieved that this woman could be aught save what the fair cherubic face of her avouched; and she looked back with passionate vexed longing to those golden gates that he had closed upon herself—the gates of an actress's career!

She is not the first, who, saved from hell, have thought that they lost heaven.

'Is this all that Paris has done?' thought Tricotrin. 'To exchange her young Faust for the stage of Paris, is a poor mending of evils!'

His spirit chafed within him; all his happy philosophies, which loathed anxiety, and sought mirth and serenity as the essence of existence, were jarred and dethroned by this feminine incarnation of Caprice which he harboured.

He felt a sort of despair before her future; he

to whose strong and sunny nature despair had been unknown. Rich he could never make her; give her the life she coveted he never could; how then could he make her content, or even perhaps keep her from destruction? For Tricotrin knew her sex well; and knew that these passionate propulsions, such as hers, to wealth, and glitter, and luxury, are a hundredfold more likely to be the cause of a woman's fall, than the softer and more generous emotions to which their dishonour is sentimentally attributed.

He had answered her with a bitterness and a sternness wholly unnatural to him, because his powerlessness in this one thing stung him so keenly. For one solution only of the problem rose before him. She loved him with a genuine ardent love, if it were only the love of a child; she had grown infinitely dear to him in the past year, her loveliness beguiled his eyes, her grace bewitched his senses; and all his heart and his soul had kept so full of youth still through the warmth of his sympathies and the healthfulness of his life, that he, so young still in all the best things of youth, forgot he was not so in her eyes. Forgot it at times when the thought swept by him,—why should it not be possible for this bright bird to find its best-loved nest in his own bosom, there to be safe-harboured ever from the beat of the storm wind and the swoop of the hawk? He never drew the thought out into full light

from the golden haze of immature resolve and resisted desire in which it lay; but it abode with him, and grew daily, stronger than he knew. It had moved him to the vehement and caustic satire with which he had retorted on her allurement to the pollution of the stage:—he had indeed scorned the traitress of Bruno, but it was as the temptress of his Waif that he abhorred Coriolis.

He had been unable to foresee when he took the child to the gay follies of the gayest theatre, that this woman, whose triumphs were more than half due to her sins, would exercise so instantaneous and fatal a sorcery over the mind of a creature whom he would have thought far too proud to care for the tinsel lustre and the false glamour of a dramatic career. To him, knowing the vain, cruel, criminal, sensual life of the lost wife of Bruno, the actress was no more than a marionette set in play to provoke a crowd's laughter: that she could be, by virtue of her smiling eyes and her enchanting grace, an angel in Viva's sight, was incomprehensible to him.

Long doubtful whether or no to darken the sunny horizon of her thoughts by the knowledge of evil and misery, he was stung at last by her persistent regret for her lost deity, to tell her the story that the Marseillais sailor had told him.

He did not show her the guilt to which Bruno's wife had fled, but he showed her the heartlessness of that flight, he sketched to her the awful wreck

of the man's mind, and the pathetic fidelity of his wronged love. Viva was volatile, careless, selfish, though in a soft bewitching fashion: he fancied almost, at times, that she needed to be scourged with pain to become, like Undine, a human creature to feel.

She listened where they had stopped, by a bench under the great Luxembourg trees, with her eyes full of earnestness, her face full of wondering regret. It touched her, this tragedy—if it did not penetrate very deeply.

'The poor Bruno!' she said softly, with a sigh of pity: she was always pitiful, when—she paused to see pity was needed.

'Well?' said Tricotrin gently, when the tale had been told. 'Well!—which are your sympathies with now, your goddess Coriolis, or the sailor whom she wronged and forsook?'

Viva meditated wistfully, her head sinking down like a flower with dew in its bells.

'Of course she was cruel—she was wrong,' she murmured. 'But then,—how could they be happy? He was content with the life, and she was not!'

Even while the swift instinct of the child fixed with accurate aim on the one secret of the misery of so many wedded lives, she stabbed, in her innocent unconsciousness, to its core the generous and noble heart, that gave her such unrequited tenderness.

Tricotrin rose quickly from their seat under the chestnut-tree.

'So! Discontent is pretext enough for disloyalty!' he said bitterly. 'Well—what we allow to nations we must accord to women, I suppose!'

And he took her home in silence to her little city-nest, high in air, in the Pays Latin.

She knew that in some way she had vexed him, but she did not seek to find out why, with her customary caressing penitence: she, in her turn, was aggrieved because her fair idol had been cast down from her altar, and proved no longer of soilless ivory, and of pure silver, but of common dark-stained clay. The actress had brought the first severance and difference between them; because, by the lips of the actress the voices of the world, the voices of sins that are sweet, had spoken to Viva.

Meantime, circumstance fashioned her fate as it commonly fashions the fates of all, let prescience, and sagacity, and skill, and care, strive how they may to shape them, so that no chance or accident should ever have power adversely to affect them.

That night Tricotrin's heart smote him; he thought he had been harsh to the 'little one.' He rebuked himself for having so roughly brushed away her happy ideals; for having so ruthlessly shown her the corruption of what looked to her innocent eyes so divine. He had spoken on the spur of an acute pain, and of the fear that had filled him lest she should fall into the pleasure and passion-baited snares of a courtesan's career. He fancied he had

been cruel to her, as he watched her sitting in the attic window, looking out over the sunset-tinged roofs of Paris with a troubled shade on her face, and her hands lying listlessly in her lap.

Yet—if she deemed him cruel because he would not launch her on that life, he knew that she must continue so to think him. He would as soon—or sooner—have aided her to throw herself into the black Seine, flowing yonder under the old walls of the Palace of Justice.

He went up to her and laid his hand on her shoulder.

'Well, Viva!—what good was it for you to set your heart on roaming with me if the first yellow-haired woman you meet makes you dissatisfied thus?'

'It is not that,' the girl answered slowly. 'It is—'

'It is what?'

'Well—I was thinking if one would be like *her* through being wicked, it must be very hard work to keep good!'

Tricotrin smiled, a little sadly.

'You have found out that common-place? I do not dispute it. Evil thrives; and honour will not be wooed because she brings plenteousness. It is just this which corrupts the world, Viva,—evil pays well, honour will not be followed by mercenaries.'

She gave a deep sigh.

'But *she* looks so happy?'—the question could not be general to her, she argued only from the personality.

'Happy! As a mollusc is happy so long as the sea sweeps prey into its jaws; what does the mollusc care how many lives have been shipwrecked so long as the tide wafts its worms? She has killed her conscience, Viva; there is no murder more awful. It is to slay what touch of God we have in us!'

Viva was awed, and was silent.

'Why does God let such things live then?' she asked, at the last.

'Ah, child! Why does God let the dumb beasts be born only to perish after lives of long torture? The marvel of creation is one we shall never solve on earth. But come! Those problems are too deep for your age. Let us go and see the last fireworks!'

The fireworks made her a child again; they were the end and crown of the long week of festivity, and they fell in golden showers and leapt in fires of every hue, till they were seen by those far away on the distant terraces of Saint-Germain.

The young uplifted head, with that glow and conflict of colour reflected on it, as the sparkling rain of flame sprang upward, and descended from the summit of the Arch, attracted many a glance near her far more than did the fire-play. With the lofty stature and the leonine head of Tricotrin

behind her, as he guarded her from the pressure of the crowds, she was a picture;—even to the picture-sated eyes of worn Parisians.

Among those who thus saw her were two whose gaze never left her face, so unconscious of their study of it, as her eyes followed the gay magnificence of the fireworks' display.

One of them was a man jammed in the dense press, into which he had accidentally been entangled —the man to whom Tricotrin had given his 'chance.' And he read her face with a hard eager intentness, as one who reads the lines of a book that he must commit to memory, and use at need.

The other was a person looking wearily out from where his carriage was blocked, in a by-street, refused entrance into the Champs Elysées that was consecrated to foot passengers. He was an invalid, a scholar, a nobleman, a recluse of middle-age; and the face of the girl with its brilliant tint, its careless happiness, its marvellous perfection of beauty, youth, and health, stirred him to a strong emotion, half-pain, half-pleasure.

The carriage was close to the corner of the street; its object had been to cross the road, but the mounted gendarmes had interposed. Tricotrin was scarcely a yard from it; its occupant leaned slightly forward and spoke to him.

'Tricotrin! Let your young companion come hither; she is not safe in that throng.'

Tricotrin looked round, and smiled.

'Thank you;—you are very kind.'

The offer had been frankly made; he accepted it as frankly, knowing well the speaker. Viva was lifted in an instant upon the seat of the equipage; and, as she thought to herself, if she had only not had that scarlet cloak on with its hood half over her curls, who could have known she was not a young duchess? Her vexation about the cloak slightly spoiled her pleasure in the fireworks; she had not thought of it on foot, but in a carriage—it was so different. She would not have been much consoled if she had known how exquisitely picturesque that costume made her look. Viva, like many of her sex, well as she loved her loveliness, would rather have looked great than have looked beautiful.

She was occupied, too, in glancing at the owner of the vehicle; he was worn, pale, attenuated, plain of feature, though his countenance was one of great intelligence; he did not at all look like the knight-errant who was to take a dispossessed princess back to her rightful heritage, but he had an attraction for her because he was visibly of some high rank by his attendants, and because his weary melancholy eyes dwelt on her with so unmistakable an admiration.

She talked to him, in answer to his questions, with vivacious volubility; she was happy, elated,

excited, and had an intense enjoyment in being so prominent in that grand carriage—an enjoyment only damped by the hapless scarlet cloak.

Tricotrin leaned against the door, and listened to her mirthful chatter—in silence.

'May I not drive you home?' asked the owner of the carriage, when the last of the fire-show was over. Tricotrin lifted the girl down on to the ground.

'No—those born to walk had best not learn the ease of equipages. Many thanks for your kindness and your courtesies.'

The Duke de Lirà smiled wearily.

'That man is a character,' he thought, as Estmere had done before him; 'and the child—the child is like a summer-day in one's youth.'

The next afternoon the same elegant equipage entered the Pays Latin, and its master ascended the five flights of ricketty stairs to the chamber where Viva, after a long morning out of doors, sat on the boarded floor, cracking nuts, and tossing them uncracked to her old friend Mistigri, singing to herself a gay opera air of Ricci's, caught up from the streets. Mère Mévert was with her sick son; Tricotrin, on a smooth-planed plank of deal, was painting with that rare happy skill he possessed, smoking the while, and thrusting out of sight for the moment that vexed question, 'what would become of her?'

He rose, and welcomed the new-comer cordially, though with surprise. Viva dropped her nuts, and sprang to her feet—to be caught sitting on the floor was worse than to have been seen in a scarlet cloak! But, his carriage apart, this stranger had so little of grandeur about him, was so grave, so unassuming, so dumb, as it were, before the dauntlessness and the pretty insolence of her own air, that Viva concluded he could have been nobody very great, after all, and heeded his presence but little.

Tricotrin, on the contrary, treated him with a regard he rarely showed to men of rank; he knew the worth of character when he met it, and this character was of pure gold.

Years before, in the wild, hot days of a midsummer revolution, he had seen it tested. The mob had thundered at the gates of a great hotel, and forced the bronze and brazen scroll-work in. On to the flight of steps that led to the entrance-door, when the court was filled with seething human life, there had come one weak and slender form, inspired with all the fire and the dignity of a great race in that one moment. The sickly and suffering Duc de Lirà had looked quietly down on the infuriated people with a look half contempt and half compassion. 'You intend to pass my threshold?' he had said. 'Very well. But it will be over my dead body. Now—advance!'

And Tricotrin, whose pulse never beat so high as

under the wine draught of revolution, and whose voice the insurgents followed as chargers the trumpet-call, hearing that quiet and gallant defiance had turned on his own people, and forced them back at risk of his own life and limb, and scourged them with fiery words as pillagers and thieves.

The nobleman and the revolutionist had rarely crossed each other's paths since then. The career of the ailing, learned, secluded gentleman, and that of the adventurous, erratic, sunny-tempered bohemian, could have few points of meeting; but there had been ever since esteem between them, though the enormous divergence of their lives kept them far asunder.

The Duke de Lirà—last of a mighty race—oftentimes envied with a sigh the superb health, the careless joyousness, the liberty, and the wanderings of the man who owned nought but his Mistigri and his Straduarius. He himself had been delicate of frame from his birth upward; and—for this solitary representative of his old legitimate line—there was but one creed, one king, one flag, possible; and he had no place nor part in the France of the Present. Lonely are the men who are before their own time; but doubly isolated are the men who are behind it.

Restrained by a fancied honour from departing ever from the political traditions of his house, he spent his years in charity, in study, in travel, ming-

ling little in the pleasures of his rank, not at all in their ambitions. He had never married; he had shunned the society of women; he was of a nervous and sensitive temperament, and now, even the presence of the gay and haughty child — foundling though she was—kept the great nobleman almost silent and almost embarrassed. For so long a period he had never heeded the fairness of woman; her beauty, her youth, her pretty audacities were like some startling revelation to him of all that he had missed and lost.

He stayed an hour or more, watching the progress of the painting, talking with Tricotrin as scholar with scholar, glancing always at the child. Her history he learned in a few words; and he wondered to himself what lordly or princely stock had given to this nameless Waif her royal air, and her imperial grace. He offered her many pleasures, amongst them he invited her to go and see his house, a palace filled with the treasures of art that Tricotrin had saved from the mob's destruction. But Tricotrin gently declined all his proposals; he followed his visitor out down the stair-case, and spoke what he would not speak before Viva.

'See here, M. de Lirà,' he said, as they stood in the doorway. 'You have just heard the little one's history. I have no riches; she can have none. What avail to give her tastes that cannot be gratified, desires that can only be wormwood? I let

you come near her because you are a man of pure honour—she is safe with you; but I would scarce do so with any one else. Viva is a foundling; Viva must be of the people. She is ready enough now to rebel at her lot; ready enough in her innocence to throw herself into misery, if the misery have gilded gates that she fancies are the portals of power. We must teach her content as best we can, or her future will be one of absolute wretchedness—if not of disgrace. I know well that you would be the last to push her one step nearer that; so,—understand my sole motive when I say, "be merciful to the child, and do not suggest to her brilliancies she can never justly enjoy." '

The Duke de Lirà listened and bent his head.

'God forbid she should be harmed; but—such a creature as that,—Tricotrin, believe me it will not be possible to teach her contentment in poverty.'

Tricotrin's eyes darkened with impatience.

'I saved her life for wretchedness then, or for shame. How can riches come with honour to a nameless, ownerless thing? You forget; men have hard enough work to emerge from the prejudices of your legitimate world, women are crushed to pieces under them!'

'That is true,' said the nobleman, simply, and he went away without more words.

Tricotrin stood looking out down the narrow street, with its peaked roofs, and the sunset glim-

mering ruddily in the casement-glass. A band of blue-bloused workmen were coming along it singing cheerily; some boy-painters were laughing and talking over their thin red wine in the little cabaret opposite; in a window high above sat a pretty black-eyed girl stitching away at the rose-coloured skirt in which she would dance at a barrière ball that night; it was all of the 'people,' but it was all bright and contented.

He crushed, ere they rose, both a sigh and an oath.

Ninety-nine out of a hundred would have been happy in Viva's place: why must she alone have this restless, ambitious, incessantly-aspiring, unconsciously-disdainful nature, which made her so ill at ease, so petulantly impatient of the life into which accident had thrown her?

Was it the irrepressible natural instinct of some patrician blood in her that thus worked in her soul, and corroded her present peace by its desire for unattainable power? It might be:—who could tell whence she came, this child who thought herself born from the fairies? Be that as it might, it was true that she would never be satisfied as she was. And his heart was heavy within him, for his love for her grew very great.

After a while he turned and went within: he ascended the stairs and called to her: she came thrusting her head out of the gloom like some Old

Master's Angel out of a back-ground of bistre shadow.

'My child,' he said, gently. 'You have seen some of the sights of Paris; but there are some still that you have not. Come and look at those now.'

She came: he was more silent than his wont, and she wondered where he was going. He did not tell her; but he went first to a building, where within the entrance-way was a little iron cradle that swung on a pivot: just placed in it was a year-old child, naked and crying piteously; the cradle was just turning for the infant to be taken within. 'That boy is a foundling, as you were, my Waif,' he said, softly.

Some streets farther on he paused again, a group of young students were reading what was written on the door of a hospital. 'They are looking what operations take place to-morrow,' he said, in the same tone. 'There are six; six lives, then, that will suffer the torment of the knife; suffer it that they may still drag on existence, sweet to them, though they are poor and of no account.'

Viva did not answer; the unusual seriousness of his voice awed and stilled her. He led her next to a long low shed around which a silent crowd was pressing.

'A dead body lies in there,' he said to her. 'A young girl not much older than you; who drowned herself last night in the Mare d'Auteuil. People

have come all day to see if they could recognize her; no one has done so yet. There are lives that are quite lonely upon earth.'

The child's face was grave and pale; she still answered nothing, but he heard her breath come and go quickly. He passed onward to a great dark melancholy pile, where the high casements were barred with iron: he motioned to her to look up at it.

'That is a madhouse for the poor. Among them is an actress, once as brilliant as your Coriolis. Can you guess what made her a maniac? She had an accident that spoiled her beauty, and when she first appeared after it the cruel people hissed as loudly as they had adored her. She stood a moment under the storm of execration, then burst into frantic laughter. Her brain was gone from that night. She had been extravagant and vicious. Such women have many lovers and no friends. There was only the public asylum for her. Yet Coriolis now is not so great as this maniac once was.'

Still, Viva said not a word: but her hands twined on his arm, and clung there closely in the fading evening light. He led her onward in silence through dark, crooked, wretched streets that she had never dreamed of; she had seen the Paris of Pleasure, the Paris that was full of light, of wealth, of merciless gaiety, of boundless reck-

lessness; this was the Paris of crime, of misery, of famine.

Fœtid odours met her like the blasts of poisonous furnaces; hideous outcries filled the air; ghastly shapes flitted through the gloom, of raving women and of starving men, and of creatures all unsexed by drink or guilt, who had nor womanhood nor manhood left: standing at the entrance of that Gehenna, where the love of that brutalized populace made him sacred, he felt the child, brave though she was, trembling through all her delicate limbs. He passed his arm around her.

'Viva, look well. Take that picture with you on your memory. This is how the mass of human lives in every city lives; they who of their own will sink to it may merit their hell, but thousands on thousands are *born* in such a pit of crime, of infamy, of agony as this, breathing its poisons as their first and only breath of life—and then the world can wonder that it reeks with sin!'

She shuddered, and clung closer to him, and hid her face upon his breast.

'Take me away! Oh, take me away!' she whispered. 'How wicked I was to ever complain or repine!'

He led her home in the same silence; and up the stairs to where a wood fire burned cheerily in the little chamber: in its light he saw that she was very pale, her hair was heavy with night dew, her

limbs shook still. He drew her to the warmth, and looked down in her eyes.

'Have I been cruel, my child? Your fever of discontent needed a sharp cure. Life lies before you, Viva, and you alone can mould it for yourself. Sin and anguish fill nine-tenths of the world: to one soul that basks in light a thousand perish in darkness: I dare not let you go on longer in your dangerous belief that the world is one wide paradise, and that the high-road of its joys is the path of reckless selfishness. Can you not think that there are lots worse than that of a guiltless child who is well-loved and well-guarded, and has all her future still before her?'

Ere his words were done she had thrown herself into his arms, in an abandonment of emotion;—the loosened tide of all her pent-up wonder, grief, and fear. It was the terror of every young life that sees for the first time the hopeless and unnumbered miseries that fill the world.

'Oh! how wicked I was!' she murmured, again lifting her tear-laden eyes to the face that ever for her had the compassion and benignity of a god. 'I —who am so happy! I—who have you to care for me!'

A beautiful light shone in his own gaze as it dwelt on her; he answered nothing in words, but he stooped his head and kissed her. To her it was only the old familiar tenderness of pardon and of sym-

pathy; but for him it had a new sweetness,—the sweetness of a new love.

As children dream by firelight so he dreamt too in the warmth of the burning logs.

Her love for him was deep and true; the unrest of her very early youth would pass away; her fanciful desires were the caprices of an imaginative and but half-dawned intelligence; was it not possible that his pity on her when she had been nought to him might be rewarded now that she had grown dear to him?

Feminine-natures were things so mutable; the fanciful ambitions of women faded so often and so happily in the dawn of their affections;—could she not find her pleasure as he did, in wandering over fresh lands, keeping ever in eternal summer?—could she not, as others of her sex had done, forget the desires of pomp and of power, in the sunny eyes and the murmuring lips of offspring that should spring up in her youth, like the white blossoms that encircle the scarce-opened blush-flower?

It was only a dream; but dreams, only, are fair, —till the dreamer awakes.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE dream remained with him all the following day; a day spent at Great and Little Trianon, where every graceful tree that grew tall and beautiful above the mossy sward, and every water-bird that splashed and floated in the weed-choked pools, whispered to Viva's fancy some mournful warning of the instability of power. She was in the mood to listen to the warning. The Trianon made her very thoughtful, she did not know much history, but she knew that one history which looks from the blue eyes of the portrait on the wall, and speaks in the yellow leaves of the old music, and steals down the gentle winds that stir the same boughs which once screened sun and heat from the white Austrian brow. It made her thoughtful; but she was very happy lying under the odorous pines, and listening to Tricotrin's stories of that old dead time.

The thoughtfulness passed; the happiness remained when she was back again in the Pays Latin, in the little high cosy chamber, watching the simmering of a wonderful sweet soup she had concocted in Spanish fashion, after his directions, of potatoes, and wine, and fruit, and spices, bubbling all together in a brazen jar.

'Shall we go to the theatre, Viva, when we have tasted that olla podrida?' he asked her; — they had gone to the theatre each night that she had been in Paris.

Viva shook her head.

'And why? Theatres were your Elysium.'

'They are nothing to me since *she* is not true!' murmured the child. 'I could not bear to see her act again!'

'Chut! How can actresses be true, little one? They are always representing what they do not feel.'

Viva shook her head again.

'I *thought* it was all true,' she said softly. 'Else I should not have cared.'

She had been wounded in her tenderest point— her good faith. She had believed in this woman with all her soul; she had identified herself with all that the actress had portrayed; that all this which had so moved her should have been false, made her feel cheated and despoiled; that the sweetness of that angel-face should have been only a painted

mask made her resent the theft, on false pretences, of her sympathy and love.

At that moment, happily for the distraction of her thoughts, the soup boiled over; Viva was at once absorbed in its rescue. It was hot, sweet, strong, delicious, and, better than all, of her own preparation. She was just pouring it out when the door opened, and the Duke de Lirà entered in the twilight. Viva was incensed beyond measure !—ah ! how mean a thing of the people she must look she thought, her cheeks scarlet with the fire, her hands filled with a brass pipkin, her laugh ringing loud and long because the little round apples, stuck all over with cloves, bobbed so drolly up and down in the fragrant mixture ! So she fancied;—little dreaming that the stranger was musing what a picture for Hebe she looked, and thinking that he would have given all he owned to be able to find mirth and pleasure in apples dancing on a frothy lake of wine as she did, and as Ben Jonson had done before her.

She did not attach any importance to the newcomer ; she did not know his rank, she thought him cold, grey, silent, uninteresting; not the least like King Arthur, or even the Prince Fainéant; but he had given her a seat in a carriage, and Viva was of the temper that made her always want to look her very best, even in the eyes of an organ-grinder that she listened to in the streets. Moreover, she saw that he admired her, and studied her, though he said

little to her, but conversed almost entirely with Tricotrin, or Mère Mévert; and she had that thorough coquetry by nature, which made her love homage, whether or no she cared two straws for the one who rendered it. To some, admiration is valueless, unless from those whom in turn they also admire: but Viva was not so fastidious. She delighted in even the stupid open-mouthed stare of amazement at her loveliness, that a despised cow-boy would give as she passed the place where he lay amongst his grazing herds.

For she was feminine to her heart's core.

The Duke's advent spoilt her soup, and also spoilt her content.

Tricotrin saw that,—impatiently. Himself, he had both regard and respect for the grave, gentle, melancholy person whose dignities brought so little joy with them; but he wished the nobleman had not found his way to this attic, and he was perplexed as to his meaning in coming there. With less than his usual courtesy he cut the visit shorter than it would have been by bidding his caller farewell, and taking Viva with him to a Café Chantant.

The girl heartily enjoyed these things, and he loved to see her amongst them, since they were what he could easily bestow.

The music enchanted her; and the coarser meanings of some popular songs could not harm her, since she was in absolute ignorance of the construc-

tion put upon the phrases that evoked such laughter around her. She laughed too, because the melodies were so mirth-provoking in their airy and droll cadences, because the gas-lit scene was so pretty and exciting, because all those students and grisettes about her laughed so riotously; but the songs might have been in Greek for aught that she understood of them.

Then, when they were over, she sat at a little round table, and ate her ices, and tasted her first champagne, and amused herself with the eternal stream of picturesque gas-lit life that passed before her, and went to bed just tired enough to fall asleep at once and dreamlessly. He had made her forget her own discontent: she was happy, and found that it was after all possible to enjoy oneself amongst 'the people.'

But fate undid all that he had done. The next day, in the dusky hour, Viva, left alone for a little while, sat in the window-seat reading by the lingering light an historical romance that delighted her—a romance wherein a herdsman's adopted daughter, after many vicissitudes, was proved to be sole heiress of the mighty castle that had frowned upon her from her birth. She was absorbed in it when the door was thrown open by some personage in a glimmer of green and gold, and into the chamber, thus ushered but unannounced, came the most exquisite little figure she had ever beheld. The

figure of a very small, very old lady, with the most delicate features conceivable, white hair, black eyes that still shone like stars, a profusion of laces, a gold-headed stick, and red, high-heeled shoes that clicked a musical patter over the bare floor.

A fairy at last! Viva rose transfixed. 'It must be Cinderella's godmother herself!' she thought; 'there could not be *two* fairies like that!' And in an instant her imagination leapt back to her home by the Loire, and she saw Roi Doré changed into a beautiful prince, and Bébé into four white horses, and the pumpkins into gilded carriages, and the chestnuts into diamonds, and herself into——But her dreams were broken by the fairy's voice, imperious but kindly:

'Do you know who I am, my child?'

'Yes,' murmured Viva, awed by this immortal visitant as she would have been by no mortal empress.

'Indeed! Who, then?'

Viva's answer was hushed and reverential.

'A Fairy! And I have hoped for you so long.'

The lady looked at her in astonishment, then fairly laughed outright. She was not displeased; her old age being very lovely and delicate, it was neither distasteful nor inappropriate to be taken for a fairy.

'No, my dear, you mistake,' she said, seating herself on one of the hard chairs. 'I am no fairy,

though I may do as well as one perhaps. I am the Duchess de Lirà.'

Viva said nothing; she felt perfectly certain that she was right, that nothing mortal could be so exquisite, so small, yet so awe-inspiring as her visitant; but she knew how dangerous it was to contradict fairies when they wished to suppress their identity, and remained discreetly silent accordingly.

'Come here, and let me look at you,' said her visitant.

Viva obeyed, a little anxiously; how did she know but what her guest might change the brass pipkin into a chariot, and whisk her off through the open lattice?

Madame de Lirà turned her gently to the fading light, and looked her all over with inexorable scrutiny. Not a single flaw could have escaped those ruthless and piercing eyes; but they failed to find one, and softened their gaze ere their inspection was done.

'Very well, very indeed,' she muttered, as she loosened her hold on the child. 'Of an exquisite grace, as he said; and surely not of the people.'

Viva coloured hotly as she heard.

'You are very pretty—nay, you are very beautiful,' pursued the old lady, calmly and critically. 'With another year or two, when your form shall have fully developed, you will be magnificent,—with culture and dress. I have heard all about you. You call yourself Viva?'

'Yes, Madame;' she was still thinking of all that she would get this fairy to do: first and foremost, Tricotrin must be made King of the World, and Grand'mère must be given new youth.

'Viva! It means nothing, but it is not ugly. You could not have been baptized in a Catholic country, for there is no such name in the Saints' Calendar. Well, you are a handsome child; and I pity you, my dear. I will take you home to stay with me.'

'To stay with you!' echoed Viva, in amazement. She had been a little bewildered as to why a fairy godmother should allude to the matter of a baptism at which she must have been the principal person present, and she did not think it according to elfin creeds to be very particular about the saints or their calendar either. But to go and stay with her, in her palace of cloud or of sea-cavern, was an instantaneous transformation about which there could be no doubt. Did she not know what Cinderella had gone to! 'But I cannot, I dare not,' she murmured, her conscience struggling with her inclination. 'Not at least without asking him first. He was so angry about the young Prince; and I cannot see him again!'

'I thank you, my Waif!' said a voice from the doorway. 'You have been faithful under trial, which Peter, whom men call Saint, was not.'

The Duchess de Lirà put up her gold glasses at

the figure she beheld,—a figure very strange to her, with his linen blouse, and his great meerschaum, and his little black Mistigri,—a figure who spoke in this careless fashion, and blasphemed the Rock of the Church!

'Madame la Duchesse,' he said, as he approached her with that courteousness which, frank to all men, was graceful to all women, 'you are come to see my Waif? Nay, that is kind and generous. May I ask to what you were tempting her?'

The old Duchess gazed at him in silence; she had heard of him, but she had never seen him. She had expected a man of the '*bas peuple*,' with whom she could have dealt in sublime condescension; she saw a man to whom even she felt condescension was not possible, and who had, even to her fastidious eyes, an air of race and of breeding undeniable.

Tricotrin turned to the child.

'Go to your room, Viva; Madame and I will talk alone.'

Viva obeyed, though very reluctantly, and with many a glance at her fairy.

'There was no need to send her away,' said the old lady, coldly. 'My son is interested in her; he begged me to show her some kindness. It is to be regretted that a child of so much promise should be lost in such a life as this. I am willing that she should come and stay a while in my household, that I may see if anything can be made of her—'

'Made of her!' echoed Tricotrin, bitterly. 'You mean, Madame, that you would amuse yourself with her whilst she is fresh to you, as with some new bird from the tropics; and then, when you have tired of her, have her trained for the opera, or cast off for the theatre, as the bird might be given to sing in a public show, no matter whether its first notes were its death-knell?'

He spoke with unconsidered irony, on the sting of the impatient wrath that he felt because these aristocrats could never leave her in peace, but must ever try to turn her away from him at the very moment her heart seemed knit closest to his.

Madame de Lirà rose with that dignity which, in so fragile a form, had so awed the Waif.

'Whether it be ignorance or ingratitude on your part,' she said, icily, 'I do not attempt to decide. Your insolence is sufficient to frustrate all my efforts for the young girl's welfare.'

Tricotrin's forehead flushed; he saw that he had been rude to an aged woman.

'I was wrong, Madame,' he said, quickly. 'Pardon me. It stings me to hear her spoken of as a thing to be bartered in, that is all.'

'There is no question of barter,' said the slow, gentle voice of the Duke de Lirà behind him.

His mother interrupted his words:

'My son, to comply with your wishes, I have done what has been exceedingly distasteful to me. The

matter has concluded as I foresaw; take me to my carriage.'

'Stay, Madame,' entreated her son, reverentially. 'The matter is but commenced. What has Viva herself said? The Duchess,' he continued to Tricotrin, hurriedly, 'came to invite the child for a month's stay with her, at my wish. Surely you cannot refuse such a—'

'I leave you to make your entreaty to your—friend!' said the Duchess, with her delicate, glacial sneer, that she did not spare even to her son. 'The girl can accept or can refuse. But I must beg you to take me down-stairs. Whether it be ignorance or insolence in this person I do not seek to inquire, at all events it is ingratitude, and strange neglect of that young creature's interests.'

The last sentence struck Tricotrin with a pang. Was his love growing brutal in selfishness?

'Forgive me, Madame,' he said, rapidly, 'I was rude to you. It stings me to have her spoken of as a thing to be traded in; but what is it you mean to her?'

The old aristocrat was softened from her wrath.

'A fine man, and gracefully mannered,' she mused, as she answered, still coldly. 'I mean well, as you may imagine. M. de Lirà interests himself in this child. She is beautiful; she is unfortunate; she occupies a terrible position in having no friend but yourself. I would rescue her from it if it be possible. M. de Lirà affirms, that he himself answers

for the truth of your story concerning her,—he has perfect faith in your integrity; and it seems to us—'

Tricotrin's eyes blazed like a lion's.

'Madame! I can hear no more words in that tone. Do you speak of us like paupers? "A terrible position!" Why does Viva occupy a terrible position? She has been reared according to nature, and not according to art. Is that terrible? It is rare.'

'It is impossible to converse with any one who demeans himself thus,' observed the Duchess, frigidly. 'I say "terrible" advisedly. The position of any female child just growing to womanhood must be so with no friend but a man who states that he is not her father, and does not purpose to become her husband.'

Tricotrin started, and the blood flushed his forehead as he heard; he paused a moment ere he replied.

'I am old enough to be the one, too old to be the other,' he answered, at length. 'But—I thank you for having shown me a danger for her that I had overlooked.'

The old woman glanced at him with her piercing eyes, which had lost little of the keenness of their youth.

'The child is very handsome,' she said, curtly, taking a sweetmeat from a silver box. He felt all that she intended to convey under that simple observation.

'Madame, I thank you,' he said hurriedly. 'You have recalled to me the world's scepticism of all in-

nocence or honesty, and its ready credulity of all vileness. Forgive my late roughness; what is it you would offer to the child?'

Madame de Lirà coughed a little: she was hardly prepared for so direct a question, so she parried it.

'I offer her—my countenance. If she come under my roof for a few weeks I can better determine what will be for her real good hereafter. In any case you may be certain that I should do whatever was just, and give whatever social advantages she might prove herself to deserve.'

He repressed a passionate oath at the insolence of patronage that ran through all the words: they were meant in kindliness and out of justice towards the child, it was not his right to cast them back with all the contempt and impatience that rose at them in his soul.

'Do you mean?' he said at length, and his voice was hoarse and hard, 'that you will play with Viva for awhile as with some new lapdog, or rare piece of faïence, and when you have wearied of her, cast her aside as you cast the dog and the china to the pages or the cabinets? Or,—do you mean a noble and humane benevolence which will honour you more than all your charities and bequests to all the churches in the world? Do you mean—'

Madame de Lirà's sparkling eyes were gathering fierce fire, and she would have answered the audacity

of such an arraignment by withdrawing, once and for all, her unappreciated condescension, had not the gentle voice of her son interposed.

'Tricotrin, you misapprehend us, I fear. It is at my entreaty that my mother has come hither to see what it may possibly be in our power to do for your Waif. Will you come aside with me, and let Viva return to the Duchess?'

Tricotrin shook himself with a gesture of intolerable impatience.

'For what? That she may be made more ill-content still with the life that is simplest, truest, and most innocent for her?'

Madame de Lirà rose from her seat.

'My son, oblige me by taking me to my carriage. You will be so good as to acknowledge that I was in the right when I predicted the outrage I should receive as my reward for gratifying your wishes against my own judgment.'

'Outrage! By heaven!' cried Tricotrin, with all the headlong impulse of pain. 'Would you admit the title of a stranger to claim one of your lap-dogs? Viva has as much interest for me as your greyhounds for you!'

But the old Duchess had passed beyond the reach of his words; and was descending the crooked stairs to her equipage. A few moments later, her son re-entered the room. Tricotrin stood silent on the hearth, with the red blaze of the stormily setting

sun shed full across him. He did not look up; he did not speak: the other hesitated a minute, then approached him.

'Tricotrin, you were surely discourteous to my mother?'

'Possibly.'

'And you totally misapprehended her.'

'That I doubt.'

'The fault of her visit, if fault it be, lies with me. I have endeavoured to interest her in Viva; I have succeeded in doing so. You must know that she can be a valuable friend if she pleases; and in this instance I believe she would so please. Are you justified in depriving the child of all the benefits she would derive from such friendship?'

'Benefits! What benefits? To be subject to the cold winds of caprice? To be the plaything of a fine lady's vagaries? To see the smile of to-day become the sneer of to-morrow? To be a patronized thing on whom great people can vent at their will their variations of ennui and spleen? I perceive nothing in such "benefits" deserving either of my acceptance or of her gratitude.'

'You are unjust. We are not the heartless and frivolous creatures you would make us out to be. If Viva—'

Tricotrin was not softened by the gentle words: they tenfold increased the unreasoning vehement rage that possessed him; the rage born of pain

like that of some gallant animal under a shot-wound.

'Viva! what of Viva? What has any living creature to do with Viva save myself? Because I cannot keep her in the luxurious wastefulness of a palace, can I lay no claim to a life that I saved? Because I found her nameless, penniless, ownerless, is that any reason why the first stranger that fancies her has stronger claim on her existence than I? Because a child's heated imaginations, and the poisonous whispers of fools, for a while make her ingrate enough to despise the life that has sheltered her body, and kept stainless her soul, is that plea enough for me to surrender every right to protect, and every title to guide her? "She is ill-content," say you! Good God! Was there ever a fondled thing that did not bite through the hand that caresses it? Was there ever a plant reared with care and with tenderness that an alien hand did not break off the flowering-crown when it blossomed? "Ill-content!" A fine plea! Would she have been more content, pray you, reared in the public nurseries, where the children of bastardy are cursed from their infancy up, for the crime of having come to the birth undesired and unwelcomed?'

The fiery torrent of words rushed headlong from his lips; the claims he never breathed to her he flung out in the face of those who desired to rob him of her; the passion of his temperament that

slept under the sunny vivacity of his habitual nature broke loose under the unbearable pain that it was to him, to have her thus sought and thus bribed. His impulses were hot and swift as volcanic fire, and he stayed neither to consider nor restrain them.

The Duke de Lirà listened with regret, but not in anger, for he knew the provocation that he gave; and he knew the justice of the resentment it awakened.

'Will you forgive me if I speak quite plainly?' he said at last. 'Of course you have indisputable claim to all her love and fealty; indisputable title to defend and shape her life, howsoever may seem best to you. But what is it that does seem so? What is it you intend to do with her?'

Tricotrin's eyes fired like an angered hawk's.

'I deny the right of any one to ask the question!'

'Perhaps I have no right,' answered his hearer, patiently. 'Nevertheless, I do so. Listen Tricotrin: if you project to make Viva anything more to you than she is now, say so and I will not press a single word more on you. She *is* yours by right in that case; and none of a surety have weightier or nobler claim upon her heart or her future than you, who stand in the stead to her of every tie. But, if you have no such intent, and all you have hitherto said implies that you have not, you will scarcely be enabled much longer to continue your present relationship to her? Reflect, you have no parent-

age to her; can you be the sole companion and protector of her life without exposing her to injurious suspicion? 'Will the world give you credit for your disinterestedness, or her for her innocence? It has too little of either, itself, to do so.'

'Pshaw!' broke in Tricotrin with imperious scorn. 'Have I ever lived for the world? That bugbear and scarecrow of the millions of fools, the breath of whose lungs is the lies off other men's lips? The world? What have Viva and I to do with the world? We forget it; it can afford to forget us; a bohemian and a foundling.'

'You can forget it: she cannot, she will not. For it will not forget her. Hear me out: you are just, you are true. You will admit a truth even when it militate against your desire. If Viva be not your wife, not your daughter, how shall you persuade others that she is not your mistress? If her love for you be not such as would make her happy in union with you, how shall you render her future content? You said yourself a few nights ago, that if ill content, she must become of all women the most miserable. It is certain she will do so. You will attempt impossibilities if you seek to keep her womanhood in the same solitude that has made her childhood so joyful. She is ambitious, proud, quick to resent, eager to enjoy—is it for the child whom you regard so tenderly that you can determine to prepare a future in which all

the darkness of an imputed shame, and none of the solace of an indulged love, will be her portion?'

'Oh God!'—the words escaped him with the stifled cry of a fierce suffering. He swung round and flashed his eyes over the speaker.

'You find strange eloquence! Are *you* her lover too?'

'You know me better than that,' said the other, simply, with a gentle dignity that bore an unspoken rebuke in it. 'A lover!—I! My years may be no more than your own; but I have none of your youth left in me. Left, do I say? I never knew it. No; I speak as I do merely from such interest in her as any one—not a brute or a libertine—must feel for a young creature of such promise. What I say sounds harsh and insolent doubtless;—but your justice will acknowledge the singleness of my motive. I have no title to dictate to you, no excuse perhaps for interference with you, but I do repeat this:—you, who are so anxious to guard her from every evil breath, you who have acted with so much nobility towards her in her defencelessness, must, for your own conscience' sake and the sake of her future, choose between one of two things. Take the right of marriage over her life, or do not stand between her and my mother's protection of her. You alone can know which of the two will best advance her happiness and yours. Whichever you decide on, tell me;—and in either case believe me my friend-

ship is yours if you will have it. A Lirà does not soon forget; I have not forgotten the July night in my Cour d'Honneur.'

He passed quickly through the evening gloom, and out from the little chamber as the words left his lips; he was generous, sensitive, sympathetic, it had not been without fear and hesitation that he had spoken them.

Tricotrin, in his solitude, never stirred from where he stood before the wood fire, whose flames were now the only light left in the darkened room. The chimes of a neighbouring clock told off two quarters, with the strokes echoing through the open casement, but he did not hear them. He was lost in thought.

The mercy he had shown was bringing its reward —in bitterness.

'To have the fate of Bruno!' he muttered, dashing the falling hair from his eyes that looked gloomily down into the leaping flames.

To take from gratitude what would not come from love;—to gain through innocent tenderness what would not be given through riper passion;— to bind to him in its wax-like malleability what, when it changed shape with older years, would recoil perchance from his clasp;—to claim the sweetness of kisses by the plea that the lips which he sought had been fed by his bread;—these were what he would do if he chose the first of the alter-

natives presented to him, if he cheated her and himself into the faith that a child's affection was a woman's love. And, these done, what would be their end, their sequel?

The freshness of winds and waters, the changes of motion and rest, the sound of a song on the air, the glow of an alp in a sunrise, the tire of toil among vine, or olive, or millet, the play and the pleasure of sinew and muscle, the bright shock of sea-water in a leap from the rocks, the careless zest of free days untroubled with thought for the morrow, the frankness of welcome from the grasp of the mountaineer, or the eyes of the girl-gypsy,—all these made his life rich, made it happy, because with them also he had the heart of a poet, the liberty of a man.

But she,—her fancy panted for power; her scorn recoiled from this simplicity of joy which, being far above her, she deemed lay far beneath her. The frail strength and the languid senses of a girl's youth could not grasp the warmth and the force and the rapture which he could feel from the mere life within him, and the mere life around him. The happiness he had he could not transfer to her. She would lie in his bosom, restless as a bird restrained by a captive hand; she would ache and sigh and grow weary for the things of wealth and of pomp that he could not bestow; and then—and then—to those sighs some

other would answer; and across his life would be the blackness of dishonour and desolation.

He beheld her future and his own as in some mirror of prophecy. He could make her his own—yes; as the hand that has fed and fondled the tame hare can stay the trustful creature as a captive when it comes for a caress. But scarce at less cost than the fate of Bruno for him,—of Coriolis for her.

And yet—he loved her with all the power of his tropical nature; loved her with a new and sudden passion, since the day that he had flung her young Faust from him. To let her go from him, to let her drift to others, was torture to him.

With unconscious violence he struck his clenched hand on the iron of the stove by which he stood.

'My God! For the first time in all my life I wish—'

The wish died unuttered in his throat. For the first time in all his laughter-lightened years he wished that a thing done, that a choice made, in his earliest youth could be undone, and be freshly chosen. For these were the rewards that his tenderness to a foundling brought him,—futile regret, and vain desire!

CHAPTER XVIII.

HE stood there long, in the darkness, with his clenched hand resting on the iron; a light swift movement came near him, a gay laugh echoed through the silence.

'I could not stay in the dark any longer. Have you sent my fairy away?'

The thoughtless words thrilled through his soul as Viva came to him: was the jest a terrible truth? Was he in his own selfish covetousness of her driving away the influence by which all the colours of glory that she dreamed of might bathe her life in their radiance?

She, all unconscious, came nearer still, and put her hands upon his arm.

'Was she a fairy? I have been thinking since it might be foolish of me to fancy her so; and yet, —she looked so exactly like one, and nothing but a fairy could have promised me all she did!'

'What a child you are!' he said impatiently, with an accent in his voice that she had never heard before. 'Fairy? No! Do you suppose fairies are real things?'

'Grand'mère does,' said Viva, gravely. 'But do tell me, why did you send her away? May I go and see her? If she is not a fairy she must be something very great; and—oh those diamonds on her fingers when she uncovered her hand to feel my hair!'

He shook her clasp off him and walked to the window:—his heart was full of tenderness, anxiety, yearning, pain, and contest for her sake;—and she thought of the glitter of jewels on a stranger's hands!

Viva looked at him with a little sense of fear; then glided down on to the floor, and leant there in front of the stove, with the light from its open door playing fitfully all over her picturesque limbs.

She began to think he was unkind;—he had sent away her Faust, her Coriolis, and now her Fairy.

It was some time before he spoke to her; then it was gravely but very gently.

'You thought me harsh to your actress, Viva?' it seemed an irrevelant question, but it sprang from his own train of thought. Viva looked into the embers.

'Yes,' she said truthfully at last: she wondered how he knew that she was thinking of Coriolis.

'Do you deem her justified then in the blow she dealt to her husband?'

He stood behind her; and she could not see the intense anxiety that was in his eyes as they were fastened on her.

She took thought a moment,—then she answered him with her golden head dropped on one side in meditation.

'Justified? No. You say nothing wrong is that; and it was wrong in her of course. But,—you see I can fancy what she felt. He had the sea, and the storms, and the boats, and the other fishermen,—and he was born for it too, and chose it himself. But she,—she might love him all the same, you know, and yet she might hate the life, might she not?—feel the cabin stifle her, and the days go slowly, and the great waters look dreary, and so, grow half mad, never seeing the world that she wanted to see. It was wrong, because he loved her you say, and did all he could, and could not help being poor. But still for her;—ah, it is so hard never to do what you want to do! It made her wicked I fancy; and then she grew cruel; and forgot that he would suffer, because she went to enjoy!'

He heard in silence, then moved from her back to the open casement: he was answered; and each word had gone through his heart like the thrust of a knife.

Her very ignorance of the extent of the sin

made her pleading for its excuse more pregnant with meaning to his ear. Unconsciously to her, her sympathy with the actress was prescience for herself.

Viva sat silent some moments gazing into the fire, too absorbed in her own thoughts to note that he had not replied to her. She started as his voice, after awhile, came again through the gloom from where he leaned by the little lattice.

'You justify infidelity and ingratitude! Well, they are accursed sins in my sight, but it may be I am too harsh to them: it may be they grow engrained in women!'

'Oh, no! I do not justify them!' cried the child, as she sprang to her feet frightened and grieved. 'What do you mean? What can you think? I tried to say—only I say it so ill—that what she did was heartless and guilty, but yet she could not help doing it as it were, because the weariness in her life drove her to it. Now look!—how I love Grand'mère, how I long to see the little kitchen again, how fond I am of Roi Doré, and Bebé, and the pigeons, and all. And yet!—so wicked I am, so shameful I am!—that I *know* if you take me back and leave me there month after month, year after year, I shall grow so impatient of them every one, I shall so long for excitement, and light, and music, and applause, and all that one hears and sees here in Paris, I shall so hate that still even

life with no change in it save the change of the leaves from green into yellow, that—let me try how I may—I shall long for that glitter and renown on the stage as she did. Do not be angry with me; it is better to tell you the truth; and how can I help what I feel?'

He gave a sharp quick sigh as he heard the words poured out in half-penitent vehemence:—how was he to hope to keep happy and innocent, since he could not keep it in riches, this nature that panted so wistfully for forbidden and unattainable things?

'I am not angered,' he said wearily, 'and God forbid I should blame you for truthfulness. But, I see plainly your danger and my duty. You must tread a path, high and bright in the sun of the world's smile; or,—or—my child, you will live to curse me that my feet did not stamp the life out of you when that life was scarce more than a butterfly's amongst the flowers!'

Then he stooped, and touched her lips with hot swift kisses, and put her gently from him, and went out alone into the shades of the autumn night.

She, awed and contrite, stood bewildered in the glow of the burning wood, with a vexed impatience on her beautiful quivering mouth.

'What could he mean? He grows so strange!' she thought, restlessly beating her foot upon the

boards. 'And he never told me now of the Fairy!'

'Viva!' said Mère Rose from the doorway. 'Viva, here are some chestnuts the greengrocer below us has just sent you. Look what fine ones!'

Viva took them without attention, but they were so large and so tempting that she interested herself in setting them on the embers to roast; and, as she watched them in their cooking, laughed and talked with the good woman, and had forgotten all her wrongs and her woes, as she peeled off the shining brown skins from the white kernel within, and dipped it down into the salt.

She had no care but what the chestnuts consoled: what did she know of the great soul that suffered for her sake?

He did not return all the following day.

The child, accustomed to look to him for all her amusements, and impatient to hear more of her Fairy, grew restless, peevish, wayward, and full of impatience.

It was a glorious sunshiny autumnal day, and she had to spend it all indoors. The woman Mévert was with her sick son, Mère Rose busied with a full household, Viva tried all her occupations to fling each away in discontent, and spent the chief of her hours beating her rosy fingers on the lattice in petulant wrath at her detested detention. As the day wore on into evening she grew very angry, like the

spoiled little tyrant that she was; and deeming herself injured by such unwonted neglect, worked herself into a chafing rage at her captivity; which at sunset she varied by gliding unperceived down the stairway, and seating herself on the wooden step of the door,—a forbidden seat that she was resolute to occupy since she had been kept imprisoned from sunrise.

Some momentary anxiety touched her as to what could have kept him away; but she believed devoutly in his omnipotence, and her chief sensation was fiery anger at her own disappointment.

'He is cruel—cruel!' she said feverishly to herself. 'He will not let me go to Coriolis, and he sends even that lovely old Fairy away! He is cruel!'

And she felt that for once she could rebel against him without scruple.

A caged linnet sang above her, shaded by a lime-bough: a pot of autumn roses shed their fragrance near her: the sunshine was playing brightly through the picturesque old alley—but she found no pleasure in anything. She was restlessly flinging away the gold treasures of her childhood in reckless eagerness for the mirage of her womanhood.

'If only he would let me go to the stage!' she thought, with wistful vehement longing. 'He says I must tread a high path, why will he not let me make one for myself there?'

The words that he had spoken had made a

deep impression on her capricious mind: they had startled, touched, and moved her; but she was capable rather of feeling vividly and passionately, than of feeling for any very long duration. She was at once intensely childlike and intensely womanlike; and she had all the fervour of the first with all the changeability of the latter temper.

The pageant of the stage had allured her with fatal power: the blaze of a public recognition wore to her all the luminance of a heavenly apotheosis; she panted to be great:—as a young leopard, captive since it was a cub, pants for the freedom of the forest and the riot of the chase:—and she could see no other way to greatness. He told her that the way was thorn-set, and ended in a Lake Avernus; but she disbelieved him with all the assured audacious obstinacy of young ignorance, and she thought,—if only she could find it out, and pass upward by it, and smile at him from the eminence to which it led!

The poison had entered her soul: and although he had thought that he had drawn out all its virus, it had sunk too deeply for any antidote wholly to act against it. Moreover, the face and the grace of Coriolis had seduced her imagination; and no warning, no counsel, no statement of fact could dethrone this sovereign of her fancy. Through Coriolis she had had a glimpse into the one world that attracted her; the one life that to her looked well

worth the living: her thoughts recurred to her lost paradise again and again and again. But now with more dangerous force: for they were nursed in silence. She had learned not to speak of the thing that lay nearest her heart:—there is no surer sign with any youthful thing that its consciousness has come, and that its innocence is in peril.

A few noons before she had leaned on the sill of the little window, impatient to go into the sunny street below. She had wondered why the grisette, who a few days before had been sewing so merrily that rose-coloured skirt, worked that day without song and with her head drooped so low.

'What ails thee, Therèse?' she had heard the girl ask who leaned out beside her: and the dark-eyed worker had dropped her head lower over her labour.

'Lulu is gone to study in Rome!'

'Ah, bah!' the consoler had cried. 'There are plenty more students as good as Lulu: and besides—he will come back.'

The grisette had shaken her glossy head with a smile as sad as tears.

'They come back from Rome—yes: but back to what they left—never.'

And Viva, with a dim perception of what her meaning had been, had felt her heart ache for the speaker, and had watched her with a dreamy interest, half sympathy, half scorn.

'Why care for a student?—if it were a king now!' thought the patrician foundling. 'Still!—it must be very sad to love like that a creature that does not care, but only goes away, gaily, to his Rome and to his pleasures!'

She was being quite as cruel as the painter Lulu: but she did not dream of applying the lesson to herself.

As she sat there, fretting at her durance, doing nothing, thinking herself cruelly used because she had missed one day of sunlight in the streets and gardens of Paris, she looked now and then up at the opposite window, where the grisette sat at work. She saw how tearfully the stitcher's eyes drooped over the heavy work; how wearily yet how tenderly the sewing girl stooped ever and again to a little wooden cradle at her feet; how listless and full of pain was the wan faded look of the face that the sunset light only lit to make paler still: and she felt vaguely sorry for the sorrow that never had touched herself. Yet she thought, half in contempt, half in compassion:

'I would not sit weeping there;—I would go to a Rome of my own, and make myself happy with somebody else!'

Of the love that sees all the world centred in one single life, Viva had no conception. It looked as foolish to her as a bee would have looked, which, finding one flower yield it no fragrance, yet should have clung persistently to the one cruel and sterile

blossom, rejecting all the thousand odours of the thousand other roses round it.

Instinctive egotism is ever instinctively philosophical.

As she sat there in the sun, with the striped awning over her head, and the carol of the linnet on her ear, there came to her a dainty little page, all scarlet and gold, like a little gallant from the galleries of Versailles, with his hat in his hand, and a profound obeisance, that would have done honour to a prince. Viva started at the sight of him: then, mindful of her dignity, sat still and regarded him—her memory went to her lost Faust: this dazzling baby-servitor looked just such an emissary as he would have sent.

He bowed again, very low, to her.

'Mademoiselle, my mistress entreats to see you once more.'

'Your mistress!'

Viva's heart beat loud:—earth held for her but one woman.

'Madame Coriolis,—she begs to speak to you,' continued the little page. 'Her carriage waits—at the end of this passage way,—she trusts you will do her this honour?'

Viva pressed her hands to her throat, to still the choking sob that rose in it at the recollection that she must refuse this temptation, by every law of duty, of love, and of obedience.

'I cannot, I must not!' she murmured. 'It would be so wicked!'

The page, regardless of her words, pressed his message on her: his mistress only craved a word, his mistress never was answered by a refusal.

'I cannot, I dare not!' pleaded Viva, losing all the memory of her own dignity. 'He has forbidden me: he will never speak to me again if I go to her. I long to come,—I do indeed,—but how can I disobey him? He is all I have in the world,—he is so good, so noble, so generous;—it would be so hideously wicked to rebel against him!'

The baby in scarlet and gold entreated, beguiled, argued, begged for his own sake, and counselled for her own, in language so well chosen, that, when backed by the seduction of her own wishes, it proved only too powerful with Viva.

'It is only to speak to me, it cannot be much harm?' she pleaded with her conscience, as she cast a hasty glance back into the house. The two women were not there to see; Tricotrin was away, there was no fear of detection; and,—who knew what she might miss for ever if she flung this chance back untried, this offer untested?

'I will go!' she said breathlessly, casting her red cloak, that lay behind her, over her head, and fleeing fast down the street—as fast as though she fled from temptation.

She knew that she was false to every better thing within her. She felt vile in her own sight, yet, nevertheless, she went.

It was the transgression of every law of love, and honour, and duty, and pure faith, that bound her life: it was the casting away by deliberate act of all the sweetness and the safety of the guardianship which environed her; it was the oblivion of his gravest counsel, and the defiance of his tenderest desire: but the passion for glory that possessed her, for the glory that to her was embodied in the form of Coriolis, was stronger than every other feeling in her. She blindly followed where that ignis fatuus led.

Panting, trembling, growing pale and scarlet by turns, with expectation and her own consciousness of evil-doing, she stood by the closed carriage from which the face of her angel looked out, in the little antique darkened street, through which the evening light was wandering in rich deep rays of blended colour.

'You sent for me?' she asked, tremulously; and looking up in this woman's sweet azure eyes, she thought with all the noble, senseless, vain, generous obstinacy of youth, that her intuition must be more true than all the experience of others, that with this fair bright face no sin could go!

'You little fool!' said Coriolis with a smile. 'Why did you let that man take you away from me the other day?'

Viva grew very pale; but she gave an honest answer.

'He says you are very wicked, and he would rather see me dead than like you!'

Coriolis laughed aloud.

'He is complimentary—your friend! Well! do you believe him?'

'I ought,' murmured Viva, wistfully and piteously. 'But I cannot! I think you are an angel.'

Coriolis laughed afresh: the ingenuous simplicity of reply did not touch her to pity, merely to amusement.

'Think so if you like,' she said, 'and I will be your good angel. See here, little one, I was in earnest when I offered to help you to a career. I can make you the fashion in a night, and I will do it if you have any sense, and are any way tractable. You have a splendid head:—I tell you so—I was not handsomer myself, I verily believe. A creature with a face like yours can always have the world at her feet. But not if she be shut up in a garret where no eyes see her. One may as well be a sparrow as a kingfisher, if one never glitters in the sun under men's sight. You are a kingfisher. Well, come and fly in the light, do not mope in a wicker cage. I will take you with me, and show you my world,—come!'

Viva, white to her lips, and trembling sorely, looked up with appealing eyes.

'Do not ask me, do not ask me!' she cried, piteously. 'He says he will never share me with you, that he will never look on me again if I go with you! I would give all the world if I had it, to come —but I dare not grieve him, I dare not!'

'Pooh!' cried the comedian. 'What are women made for but to plague the souls of men? It is our empire, that—of course he likes to keep you in prison, all gaolers love power.'

Viva shook her head.

'Oh no, no! You do not know him, he is so good, so generous, so gentle. He would never tell me anything but for my happiness. He fears you because he thinks you are so wicked, and he says that you broke that poor sailor's heart with your cruelty.'

Coriolis smiled with amused negligence, and took the means which she saw would be the surest to blind the child's instinct of right.

'Your friend calumniates me: a very general crime. It is the penalty we pay for our eminence,' she answered. 'Sailors! have I ought to do with common seamen? He errs strangely: but we will show him his error. Come you only with me,—just for these next few hours,—and I will make a princess of you. He shall see you on the throne of the world; for is not the applause of all Paris that? and he will thank me, and worship me as your best friend. Look you, little lady;—he is poor, this Trico-

trin of yours, you are a great tax upon him, you are a burden that serves him in nothing. Have you ever thought of that?'

'Never!'—her head drooped, the remembrance was a deadly blow to her pride.

'But it is the truth nevertheless. Now, if you will trust me I will make you great, applauded, courted, powerful, above all independent. And what is there so sweet as independence? To go where one will, to do as one chooses, to have to ask nought except one's own fancy, to scatter money where and when and how one pleases! Ah, try that! you will never endure dependence after it. You have a proud face: how can you bear to eat the bread of charity?'

The child was stung to the quick: the merciful hand that had saved and sheltered and succoured her, looked now like a glove of iron, whose clasp froze her blood.

Coriolis saw the pain that she inflicted, but she was pitiless to it.

'You are nothing but a young pariah, a young pauper now,' she continued. 'If you will come with me we will change all that. You will leap at a bound into your proper sphere; you will become rich as well as famous; think then how you can repay this man whom you love, whereas now you are only a care, a weight, an expense, an onus upon him. Have you remembered all this? Come!—just

to see for two hours what my empire, what my world, are like. You shall return at nightfall: I will send you home; and I will take care that he hears at once that you are with me,—I know where he is,—and he will be too just, I trust, when he sees my desire to serve you, to continue to think such false and such evil things of me.'

'Oh, yes! I know well that he would, if he would but believe!' sighed Viva; and a beautiful vision arose before her, of her idol purified in the sight of her friend, cleansed of calumny, and beloved by him as well as by herself, in all the radiance of that new world for which she pined. It was a child's vision, all glorious with colours never seen upon earth, generous with all the fanaticism and chivalry of youth, vain and self-confident with all youth's headstrong bigotry and ignorance. Every warning had died out from her remembrance. Coriolis was in her belief at once the noblest empress, and the noblest martyr, that the world could hold.

'You shall make him believe,' said her temptress, indifferent what she averred. 'Come with me,—at least for an hour or so? You are no baby, that you must have no will of your own. You are old enough to act for yourself; and you must act if ever you desire to be great. The years are few that a woman reigns: she cannot afford to waste one. Come with me; and you shall see what my life is like. I will give you a glimpse

of it to-night. I will metamorphose you into a young sovereign,—you are nothing now but a little peasant. You want costume, jewels, lace, trailing skirts, everything! All those embellishments are to a creature like you, as its gold setting is to an emerald. Without them you may be a gem indeed, but you are unpolished, and will glitter in no regalia. Come! you cannot be afraid? You look brave enough to take your own way, and adhere to it. If you listen to him you will pass your whole life in an attic like the one that imprisons you now; you will never be seen except by some clowns on a farm, or some boors in a tavern; you will never wear anything better than linen and serge; you will always go on foot and have others splash you with the mud of their chariot-wheels; you will always sit at your lattice window to see the world's processions pass by without you; you will always be obscure, obscure like a wretched mole under a tree, when with one effort of will, one touch of sense, you might have changed all that, and been as great as I am. Only think, little fool—only think what it is that you do!'

Viva's whole form was tremulous with emotion and desire. 'To be obscure!' it was the one hell that she dreaded. 'To be great!' it was the one heaven that she craved. To be one of those who 'sat at their lattices' in the quietude of a humble home, while the great pageantry of life swept on be-

low her window with no place in its carnival crowds for her, no voice of hers in its laughter, no banner amidst its proud standards upheld by her hand, was the future that she feared with a passionate terror,—the terror of inborn ambition, of predominant vanity.

With a single bound her foot was on the carriage steps, her hand upon the carriage cushions.

'I will come!' she cried, breathlessly. Shame was on her, and all the consciousness of sin against the one to whom her lifelong allegiance, and her uttermost sacrifice, were due. She felt the burning horror of some great wickedness consume her, she knew that she wronged him in his absence,—a crime and a cowardice in one. But the temptress prevailed with her; the desire for the unknown conquered her; her idolatry of this one forbidden thing was stronger with her than all ties of gratitude.

'I will come!' she cried; while in her ear there seemed to sound the words that he had spoken: 'Share your life with that wanton I will not.'

'That is right, that is wise,' said Coriolis, with a smile, as she drew her up into the carriage. 'You are a child no longer; you have a woman's divine right—Self-Will.'

END OF VOL. I.

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